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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended to enlighten the general education classroom teacher concerning many of the readily available strategies that can be used in their curriculum to enhance reading skills. In the bibliographies in the paper, the reader will note references to Robert E. Slavin and others relative to Collaborative Learning; these references represent an intrinsic element of reading education--working together--and are included in hopes of further "motivating" both teacher and pupil. The paper offers diverse suggestions for the general education classroom teacher to commit to moving outside the "box" of daily text and "covering material" and immerse himself or herself in the world of reading instruction. It includes full explanatory notes on each strategy detailed in the Appendix. (NKA)

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# Suggested Classroom Practices

## Strategies for the General Education Classroom Teacher to Increase the Reading Level of Students

E.R. Marnell
DeKalb County Schools
November, 1999

CS 013 759

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# Suggested Classroom Practices

"As in every domain of learning, motivation is crucial." The words are taken from the 1999 report on Prevention Reading Difficulties in Young Children" by the National Research Council. As classroom teachers, we have heard the thought expressed in various ways many times over. This report is intended to enlighten the general education classroom teacher concerning many of the readily available strategies that can be used in their curriculum to enhance reading skills. Hopefully, it might also serve to motivate teachers themselves toward becoming more committed to the development of their own instructional reading expertise.

In the bibliography, the reader will note the references to Robert E. Slavin and others relative to Collaborative Learning. These references represent an intrinsic element of reading education—working together. They are included in hopes of further 'motivating' both teacher and pupil.

Work on this paper actually began in June of 1999 when the author began an initiative known as Skilled Comprehenders involving the general education classroom teacher. It soon became obvious that Reading Specialists were to play a key role in this pilot project involving a multi-disciplinary, collaborative learning (and writing) effort. Data from the students' academic files and discussions with teachers, Reading Specialists and instructional coordinators confirmed that significant efforts in reading instruction would be required.

Consequently, the bibliography will contain numerous references to consults with the following DeKalb County Schools personnel: Dr. Stanley J. Henson, Dr. Regina Merriwether, Dr. Joanne Lottie, Mrs. Sandi Woodall, Dr. Dorothy Brown, Dr. Patricia Davis, Mrs. Elizabeth Filliat, Dr. George Cozens, Mr. Jeff Durden, Mr. Joe Faulkner, Mr. Michael Nance, Mr. Percy Mack, Dr. Martha Reichraft and Dr. William Hammond.

In addition, the personnel of Southwest DeKalb High School including Mr. Prince, Miss Porter, Mrs. Prothro, Dr. Langston, Mrs. Russell, Mr. Bailey, Mrs. Quiouret and Mrs. Weeks are acknowledged for their gracious direction, information and participation in both Skilled Comprehenders and the direct (and indirect) input concerning reading education, though none bear any responsibility for this report. A special thanks must be given to Mr. Buddy Quiouret for his gracious and untiring assistance in all things educational.

Manuscripts of what the author considers significant bearing on this report are included in the bibliography and the author bears witness to the wonderful assistance provided to him during the last few months by the staff of the DeKalb County Schools Jim Cherry Teachers Center.

The reference to the Reading Miscue Inventory is included although the actual publication and its update are not. Both books are available through DeKalb County Schools Reading Instruction Coordinator Mrs. Dee Brown. The Reading Miscue

Inventory was devised for the general education classroom teacher and, as such, should be an added source of information for the teacher.

This paper is *neither a manual nor* a How-To handbook. The intent is as the title states: suggestions for the general education classroom teacher to commit to moving outside the 'box' of daily text and 'covering material' and immerse oneself in the world of reading instruction. The immersion to be a part of what goes on in the classroom each day. For that reason, the full explanatory notes on each strategy are included in the Appendix. The author hopes that the additional resource material that served as rationale for this report might be considered good reading as well. --E.R. Marnell

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# Gather Your Data

## Do You Know Your Students?

DeKalb County Schools maintains records of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests on each student. These test scores not only include the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) data but data on reading comprehension and vocabulary recognition in the core courses: science, social science, mathematics and language arts. PSAT (sophomore class) and other data will be available during the upcoming academic year.

1) Through the Reading Specialist assigned to your school, request the printout of students at your grade level and ask for the version denoting Grade Level Equivalents (comprehension) for each student. These scores are arranged by Core Curriculum classes—Science, Social Science, Mathematics and Language Arts. Your Reading Specialist can assist you in making the request and advise you of test data interpretation. (Henson, 1999)

2) By working with the data, you may be able to devise the 'high-lows' of your students scoring on the ITBS in addition to gaining a GLE on the core classes. This data is invaluable in giving yourself a complete 'look' at the class you are going to teach in terms of their reading level and the material you are responsible for presenting.

3) Determine if other data is also available through your reading specialist.

**Arrange your data**

If you do not have access to a standard deviation calculator program, arrange your data by GLE, designating students below a) one standard deviation from the mean, or (b) those students scoring at grade levels three levels below your current content class. Should you be unfamiliar with the notion of 'Standard Deviation', consult your Reading Specialist.

# Inaugurate a reading tutorial

- See input from the Reading Specialist concerning an early-morning or after-schools reading tutorial program focusing on the content area and

the children you have identified. If a teacher finds it difficult to remain after school or arrive before regular time, plan a tutorial IN YOUR CLASSROOM on a regular, recurring basis. (If they "can't read"...Teach them!) This tutorial effort is long term and on-going throughout the year with little or no expectation of immediate gains. It is YOUR investment in reading! Your students will be expected to gain the DIVIDENDS. (Davis and Lottie, 1999)

- Make early (in the semester) contacts with parents recommending their children attend the tutorial as an enhancement to their general education efforts. The student will recognize parental involvement as another support of the reading effort. (Brown, 1999)

- Use your own classroom for implementation of Reading in the Content Area strategies easily available through your own research or your Reading Specialist. It is easy to have your limited time completely absorbed by content alone but periodical reviews of these strategies with your Reading Specialist will develop your personal reading instruction skills in a practical, applied manner. For yourself, plan at least one such tutorial each semester. (Filliat and Davis. 1999)

Intensive instruction on any particular skill or strategy should be based on need. Thus, intensity will vary both with individuals and with groups.—Dr. Dorothy S. Strickland

**Use Encyclopedic Aids and Thoroughly Examine all Resource Material**

Most teachers actually avoid use of encyclopedic references due to what they deem cursory and sometimes-topical presentations. However, these types of presentations offer the reader another version of subject matter and in many instances are a 'stepping stone' to learning/reading more intensely about a subject. You may wish to make use of such readings in class as well. Most are geared to oral reading presentations with excellent sentence formation, grammar and word recognition. Try them. Document how it worked on a particular subject, chapter or problem. (Cozens, 1999)

Such references offer an important writing aspect:

1) Although often re-written in a 'glassy-eyed' manner, students DO write.

2) Students asked to paraphrase their writing or 'researches' are making use of an important skill involved in all reading. It provides another opportunity to "speak the lingo" of the subject or core area. It leads to 'listening' to what others have to say or report. Asked to link their work to the class activities and readings strengthens the presentation of the original material. (Durden, 1999; Filliat, 1999)

3) Seeing a topic they are taking 'in class' listed in an auspicious publication such as an encyclopedia lends a touch of relevance to their efforts. It may spark continued interest in the surrounding events or reading material that is involving the remainder of the class. (Cozens and Durden, 1999)

4) Make a complete search of related curriculum material. The text is NOT your only resource. Develop a Resource List of available or planned activities and strategies that might be included in your presentations throughout the semester or school year. Discuss these elements with your department chair or administration if you feel their approval or authorization is required (field trips, movies and visuals, art or music presentations, etc.) (Hammond, 1999)

5) Develop your personal expertise in Collaborative Learning strategies. Many group learning activities offer students another 'window' of experience in listening, speaking, writing and reading. (Slavin)

6) Know WHAT the students are expected to LEARN based on your own school's curriculum guide or the mandated testing eventually facing them. TELL the students what they are expected to become versed in and repeat it often. Just as you begin each class alerting them to 'today's lesson'; remind them often of the broad scope of the class and the relevance of critical thinking skills. (Hammond, 1999)

7) Get their attention! (When all else fails, go to Rule 7).

**Develop Sponge Activities around Reading and Writing**

Choose your opening activities with care, emphasizing reading and writing in student responses. Remember that Job 1 is..."get their attention!"

**Make Reading and Writing a Part of Your Classroom Time Management.**

| Day of the Week | Reading | Content |
|---|---|---|
| Content Area | | |
| Reading (Directed) | | |
| Writing | | |

• Table. Projected use of available classroom time per general category

Track your efforts (the above is just a suggested example) toward engaging students in specific, pre-planned reading and writing activities.

Your Reading Specialist can be of tremendous value helping you incorporate directed, guided readings in your content area augmented by such activities as silent reading and outside reading. In addition, the incorporation of writing exercises will build on reading skill improvement.

**Reading Strategies for In-Class Implementation**

Here are some basic Reading Strategies that follow a prepared general education classroom teacher's efforts after a) the teacher KNOWS as much as practical about reading levels of students in the class; b) the teacher has prepared strategies through consults with the Reading Specialist; c) parents have been alerted about additional tutorials available in the school and d) the teacher has detailed information concerning available resources and strategies intended to enhance the learning styles of the students. What follows is attributed to the Linguallinks Library (See Appendix for full guidelines on each activity) While the strategies are not original, the advantage to systematizing such activities should be obvious to the teacher.

- ✓ **Cued Reading**
- ✓ **Duet Reading**
- ✓ **Echo Reading**
- ✓ **Group Reading**
- ✓ **Paired Reading**
- ✓ **Repeated Reading**
- ✓ **Shared Reading**
- ✓ **Guided Questioning**
- ✓ **Sustained Silent Reading**

**Cued Reading**—giving the learner clues to make the text meaningful, predictable and readable. Objects or pictures might be used to discussion. Look at the title with the students and discuss what it might be about. Have the learners read along with you or read the text alone.

**Duet Reading**—the student reads with a skilled reader. The strategy aids in development of expression, reading speed and confidence. Often the readers sit side by side. The skilled reader is staying a syllable or two ahead of the student, and reads fluently with expression. Gradually, the student begins to 'catch' the skilled reader.

**Echo Reading**—literally, reading AFTER the student reads. Allowing the student to read a passage then reinforcing the student's reading by allowing them to HEAR what they have read.

**Group Reading**—each student has the text or reading material. You have often heard stories of sailors singing in unison...the chantey is the sound of their working together.
Material is read by the teacher at a pace that allows the group to follow by tracking. The text is then re-read...with the instructor stopping mid-sentence and the group reads aloud the remainder of the sentence. The instructor increases the stopping points as the passage continues until the group is able to supply most of the words, stopping only at the words when they have difficulty. Supply the words that are difficult.

**Paired Reading**—students read together. A skilled reader is paired with a less-skilled reader and the two read a text together. The less skilled reader takes over when they feel confident. Allowing students to decide for themselves when to read builds their confidence and helps remove fear of failure.

**Repeated Reading**—choose, or let the student choose, smaller or relatively easier elements of the material. Gradually progress to the more difficult material. Read passages with the student the first time for comprehension. Check in discussion for comprehension. Once readers understand what they are reading, the concentrate on the reading more quickly. Emphasize the student's speed rather than accuracy. Repeat the process with a new passage.

**Shared Reading**—useful for prediction in reading and helping new readers and writers learn about the relationship between print and speech. There are other advantages as well. This technique is originally intended as a 'learning to read' strategy for younger children. However, the high school teacher will find it adaptable to language arts and art or music instruction (or) to highlight art, music, and poetry in league with the core curriculum.
Mr. Marnell, for example, presents a large poster of poetry (Big Book) focusing on Geography and History, and with proper introduction and explanation, the class 'shares' in the reading and interpretations. Likewise, music with historical or geographical themes are presented in much the same manner (songs of the Depression; music of the Renaissance, Jazz, Ragtime, etc.) all of which can be a shared LISTENING experience leading to continued discussion of the lesson's terms and language of the curriculum.

**Guided Questioning**—emphasizes locating information rather than comprehension of a particular text. Materials that are used have specific and easily identifiable answers to questions the teacher asks. Outside reading sources are often used—newspapers, instructions, etc. The text may also play an essential role. This activity is also a writing activity in that students are completing answers to the teacher's questions in complete sentences and using the vocabulary found in the text. Passages are read with the students until they can read it well for themselves.

**Sustained Silent Reading**—Probably the most under-used strategy of any general classroom (Marnell, 1999) and one that often surprises students so that often instructions need to be given more than twice (Cozens and Durden, 1999). However, once sustained silent reading is introduced in a classroom the link to student accountability is enhanced.

There are no guarantees that sustained silent reading maintains a student's focus or attention but the skilled classroom teacher will be able to use a question-answer period to judge its effectiveness. The strategy should be a part of the weekly classroom planning. Mamell suggests that a one-question 'accountability' question be included as part of the student's evaluation of the session. (See Appendix M).

# Appendix M

The accountability cards shown are used by the instructor during Collaborative Learning or Silent Reading Strategies as a measure of student accountability for the exercise. (Marnell, 1999)

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

[redacted] **Name**

1 2 3 4

**Individual Accountability**

[redacted]

**Assgnmnt. No.**

Instructor evaluation___

Your group experience 1 2 3 4

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**Consults**

Dr. Dorothy Lloyd Brown, Coordinator, Secondary Reading, Division of Instruction, DeKalb County Schools. Consult dates: August 16, 18, 23. September 17, 20, 24. October 15.

Dr. Stanley J. Henson, principal, Southwest DeKalb High School. Consult dates: August 3, 10, 18, 19. September 17, 20, 27. October 28.

Dr. Joanne Lottie, assistant principal of instruction, Southwest DeKalb High School. Consult dates: August 16, 18, 23. September 5, 9. October 28.

Dr. Patricia Davis, Reading Specialist, Druid Hills High School. Consult verified through Mr. Jeff Durden, Druid Hills High School, Fall Semester, 1999. Also, September 23 and October 15.

Mrs. Elizabeth Filliat, Reading Specialist, Southwest DeKalb High School. Consult dates: Weekly, August through present.

Mr. George Cozens, staff, Southwest DeKalb High School. Consult dates: daily, August through October.

Mr. Jeff Durden, staff, Druid Hills High School. Consult dates: weekly, August through present.

Dr. Regina Merriwether, principal, Druid Hills High School. Consult dates: September 23.

Ms. Connie Sandidge, coordinator of instruction, DeKalb County Schools Freshman Academies. Consult dates: September 23. October 6.

Dr. William Hammond, Instructor/Supervision & Administration of Reading Programs

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# Appendix

## Sources

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### Index Items

- cued reading
- predictable
- prereading

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
**Walter, Leah B. , contributor**
**Waters, Glenys , contributor**
**Klaassens, Anne , editor**
**Stewart, Trudy K. , editor contributor**

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# Using duet reading

## Introduction

In duet reading , the learner reads with a skilled reader . Reading together at first helps the learner to practice reading with

expression

speed, and

confidence.

*Here are the steps that a skilled reader should follow to use duet reading:*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Sit side by side with the learner and use the same book. |
| 2 | Read with the learner and set the pace, staying 1 or 2 syllables ahead. |
| 3 | Read fluently and with expression. |
| 4 | Track while reading. As learners are able, they can take over tracking and can read alone. |

## See also

Activities for teaching reading Using lap reading Using paired reading Using a neurological impress activity

## Sources

- Laubach Literacy Action 1994:52 :

### Index Items

- duet reading
- lap reading
- paired reading
- neurological impress

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
**Walter, Leah B. , contributor**
**Waters, Glenys , contributor**
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# Using cued reading

## Introduction

Cued reading gives the learner(s) clues to make the text more

meaningful

predictable , and

readable.

## Guidelines

**Here are some guidelines to follow when you use cued reading:**

Here are some guidelines to follow when you use cued reading:

Use familiar stories from the learners' culture because they are the easiest for beginning readers to understand.

Use objects or pictures to illustrate new ideas and vocabulary.

*Here are the steps that a skilled reader would follow to use cued reading:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Look at the title with the learner(s) and discuss what the text might be about. | |
| 2 | Discuss with the learner(s) any illustrations and their captions. | |
| 3 | Use words and language structures in the discussion that the learner(s) will find in the text. | |
| 4 | Try to elicit these same words and structures from the learner(s) by asking appropriate questions. | |
| 5 | Have the learner(s) | read along with you, or<br><br>read the text alone. |

## See also

Activities for teaching reading

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# Using group dynamic reading

## Introduction

The group dynamic reading activity is a good way to

build team spirit, and

encourage learners to help each other and depend less on the teacher.

It is especially appropriate when

- you are teaching reading in a culture where people like to do things as a group, or
- group members are practicing reading in a new language.

You may use any material at the learners' level, or allow the group to choose something they would like to read. *Here are the steps to follow to use the group dynamic activity:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Distribute a copy of the same book to each learner in the group. | |
| 2 | Give the learners time to become familiar with the passage and encourage them to | • look at the illustrations, and<br>• glance over the text. |
| 3 | Read the material at a pace that allows the learners to follow along by tracking. | |
| 4 | Reread the text, stopping occasionally in the middle of a sentence. | |
| 5 | Have the group read out loud the word that follows each stopping point. | |
| 6 | Repeat the process, gradually increasing the stopping points. | |
| 7 | When the group is able to supply most of the words without hesitation, have them read the entire passage in unison, stopping only when they have difficulty. | |
| 8 | Supply the words they have difficulty with. | |

## See also

Activities for teaching reading

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## Sources

Gordon 1989 :

## Index Items

- group dynamic reading

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
**Walter, Leah B. , contributor**
**Waters, Glenys , contributor**
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# Using paired reading

## Introduction

Paired reading is a reading activity where a learner and a skilled reader read a text together. The learner takes over reading in sections where he or she feels confident.

Allowing learners to decide for themselves when to read without help gives them confidence to try without fear of failure.

Reading with someone to help them at first also encourages them to try reading materials that may be beyond their normal reading level. *Here are the steps that a skilled reader should follow to use paired reading:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Read along with the learner. | |
| 2 | Adjust your speed so that you stay together. | |
| 3 | Repeat each misread word until the learner reads it correctly. | |
| 4 | Look for a prearranged signal to indicate the learner wants to read an easier section alone. | |
| 5 | Stop reading along when the learner gives the signal | |
| 6 | If the learner makes an error | say the word correctly, and<br>read along again until the learner signals you to stop. |
| 7 | Praise the learner frequently for correct reading. | |

## See also

Activities for teaching reading

## Sources

Borneman 1994 :

Koskinen and Blum 1986 :

Topping 1987 :

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**Index Items**

- paired reading
- modeled reading

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
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# Using shared reading

## Introduction

Shared reading is useful for

encouraging prediction in reading

helping new readers and writers learn about the relationship between print and speech

informally introducing print conventions

providing an enjoyable learning experience, and

teaching sight vocabulary.

The story must have large enough print to be shared with the group.

- Simple stories can be printed on the chalkboard.
- For a small group, a book with large print might be adequate.
- For large groups, stories are normally in the form of Big books or wall charts. .

## Credits

Don Holdaway developed what is known as the shared book method using Big books. The shared reading technique described here is a generalization of Holdaway's method.

## Guidelines

**Here are some guidelines to follow when you use shared reading:**

Here are some guidelines to follow when you use shared reading:

- Discuss the story and illustrations with the learners
  - prior to reading to build anticipation, or
  - after reading to aid comprehension.
- Have the learners "hum" to get the feel and intonation of the words.
- Read fluently and expressively.

*Here are the steps to follow to use shared reading:*

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Select an interesting story with repetition, or use a favorite story. | |
| 2 | When introducing a new story, talk about | the title<br><br>the cover illustration, and<br><br>the kind of story. |
| 3 | Read the story to the group, tracking each word with a pointer as you read. | |
| 4 | Reread the story as a group, encouraging everyone to join in "reading" certain words or phrases as they are able. | |

## Variation

Here is a variation of shared reading:

Highlight (with a colored marking pen) the repetitive words, repetitive phrases, or sight words that the learners already know.

Reread the story several times.

Have the learners read the highlighted words or phrases after the second or third reading, while the teacher reads the other words.

## See also

Activities for teaching reading alphabetic principle

## Sources

Holdaway 1980 :

Burris, Temple, and Nathan 1988 :

### Index Items

- Big Book
- shared reading
- shared book method

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**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
**Walter, Leah B. , contributor**
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guided questioning
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# What is guided questioning?

## Definition

Guided questioning is a group or individual activity where learners are asked questions about a text both before and after they read it. They must find the answers in the text by reading it independently and silently. **Also known as** directed reading

## See also

Using guided questioning

### Index Items

- directed reading
- guided questioning

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Ask a question about the text. | **Example:** Ask: "What is the boy's name in this story?" |
| 5 | Have the learners read the text silently to find the answer to the question. | |
| 6 | Discuss the answer to the question. | **Variation:** Have them find other occurrences of the answer if it is a short answer. |
| 7 | Ask several more questions about the content of the material. | **Example:** Ask: "What is the boy doing?" |
| 8 | Have the learners answer the questions by finding the appropriate parts of the text. | |

## See also

Activities for teaching reading

## Sources

- Laubach Literacy Action 1994:60-63 :

### Index Items

- reading skills
- guided questioning

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
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**Walter, Leah B. , contributor**
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# Using guided questioning

## Definition

Guided questioning is an activity that helps readers learn to locate and understand information in a text.

## Guidelines

**Here are some guidelines to follow when you use guided questioning:**

Here are some guidelines to follow when you use guided questioning:

- Emphasize locating information rather than comprehension of the text.
- Use materials that have specific and easily identifiable answers to questions that you ask the learners to find. Here are some good sources:

  Instructions

  Newspapers

  Scripture

  Textbooks

- Use the activity as a writing activity by having the learners write a sentence or two about the text, using vocabulary found in the text.

*Here are the steps to follow to use guided questioning:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Have the learners | look at the<br>cover illustration<br>title, and<br>first paragraph of a text, and<br>predict what the text might be about. |
| 2 | Discuss the topic of the text. | |
| 3 | Introduce any words that may be difficult for the learners. | **Variation:** Read the passage with the learners until they can read it well. |

# What is sustained silent reading?

## Definition

Sustained silent reading is a teaching activity where learners have a period of uninterrupted silent reading. **Also known as**

- Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading
- SSR
- USSR

## See also

Using sustained silent reading

### Index Items

- uninterrupted sustained silent reading
- USSR (uninterrupted sustained silent reading)
- SSR (sustained silent reading)
- sustained silent reading

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Using repeated reading
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Literacy / Instructional issues / Reading instruction / Activities for teaching reading and writing / Activities for teaching reading

# Using repeated reading

## Introduction

Repeated reading is a group or individual activity where learners

- read a text with a fluent reader, and then
- re-read the text alone until they can read it as fast as the fluent reader did.

Repeating a passage until they can read it quickly helps readers develop

confidence

speed, and

word prediction ability.

## Guidelines

**Here are some guidelines to follow when you use repeated reading:**

Here are some guidelines to follow when you use repeated reading:

- Choose, or let the learners choose, stories that are
  - about 50-200 words long, and
  - relatively easy for the learner at first, then
- Choose progressively more difficult materials as the learners advance.
- Read the passage with the learner the first time for comprehension. Once they understand what they are reading, learners can then concentrate on reading quickly.
- Emphasize the learners' reading speed rather than their accuracy.

*Here are the steps to follow to use repeated reading:*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Have the learners read along with | a fluent reader, or<br><br>a cassette tape of a fluent reader. |
| 2 | Give the learners a time goal which is the same length of time it would take a fluent reader to read the passage at a moderate pace. | |
| 3 | Have the learners read the same passage alone until they are able to read the passage in the specified time. | |
| 4 | When the time goal is reached, repeat the process with a new passage. | |

passage.

## See also

Activities for teaching reading tape assisted reading

## Sources

Hermon 1985 :

Rashotte and Torgensen 1985 :

Samuels 1979 :

### Index Items

- repeated reading
- modeled reading
- tape assisted reading

**Lane, Martha A. , contributor**
**Matthews, Delle P. , contributor**
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# Learning Styles

- Definition
- Why Use Learning Styles?
- Three Components of Learning Styles
- Learning Style Component Charts
- Summary
- Resources

## Definition of learning style:

...the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological factors that serve as relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment.

or in simpler terms.....

...the manner in which individuals process information.

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## Why Use Learning Styles?

- to get to know yourself
- to get to know your students, colleagues, and supervisors
- to facilitate learning and foster collegiality

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## Three Components of Learning Styles:

- Cognitive Style

  ...information processing habits; typical modes of perceiving, thinking, remembering, and problem-solving

  or in simpler terms...

  ...how learning occurs

- Affective Style

  ...motivational processes; typical modes of arousing, directing, and sustaining a behavior

  or in simpler terms...

...what motivates us

- Physiological Style

...biologically-based: modes of response based on sex-related differences, personal health & nutrition, and reaction to the physical environment

or in simpler terms...

...how we respond to our environment

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---

## Learning Style Component Charts

Cognitive

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Brain Dominance | Analytical<br>Global<br>Integrated | Conceptual Tempo | Impulsive<br>Reflective |
| Mindstyles | Concrete sequential<br>Abstract random<br>Abstract sequential<br>Concrete random | Modality | Visual<br>Auditory<br>Tactile<br>Kinesthetic<br>Integrated |
| Multiple Intelligences | Bodily Kinesthetic<br>Logical-Mathematical<br>Linguistic<br>Musical<br>Spatial<br>Interpersonal<br>Intraperson<br>Naturalist<br>Ethical??? | Psychological Differentiation | Field dependence<br>Field independence |

## Affective

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conceptual Level | High<br>Low | Psychological Types | Thinking<br>Sensing<br>Feeling<br>Intuitive |

## Physiological

| | |
|---|---|
| Physiological | Environmental<br>Emotional<br>Sociological<br>Physical<br>Psychological |

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# Summary

**WHAT** is a learning style?

Learning style is the manner in which a learner preceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment. An indivdual's learning style is made up of three factors--cognitive (how he learns), affective (what motivates his learning), and physiological (how he responds to his environment). As a field of study, learning style is relatively new (snce the 1970s), but appears to have strong advocates in education. The supporters of learning style-based education see it as a means to meet the needs of learners as individuals.

**WHO** are the leaders in the field of learning style?

Rita and Kenneth Dunn, James W.Keefe, Bernice McCarthy, Gordon Lawrence, Anthony Gregorc, Kathleen Butler, Marie Carbo, and Pat Guild. (Howard Gardner is a leader in the related field of multiple intelligences.)

**HOW** are learning styles assessed?

There are many instruments used to assess learning style. Some are general in scope and others assess only one or possibly two components of learning style.

**WHEN** should learning style information be used?

Learning styles can be used in any environment where people interact. Learning styles are utilized in business settings, among people working together on projects, in church groups, and they are especially useful to both students and teachers in educational environments.

**WHY** use learning styles?

- to know yourself
- to know those with whom you are working and interacting
- to facilitate learning

## If students don't learn the way we teach them, then we will teach them the way they learn!

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# Resources

## Selected Learning Styles Instruments

**General:**

Learning Style Inventory

Price Systems, Box 3271,Lawrence, KS 66044

4-MAT System

Excel Inc., 200 W. Station St., Barrington, IL 60010

**Cogntive**:

Hemispheric Dominance

Robert Zenhaursern, Dept. of Psychology, St. John's University, Grand Central Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11439

Field Independence/Dependence

Group Embedded Figures Test, Consulting Psychologist Press, Inc., 577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306
Hidden Figures Test, Educational Testing Service Princeton, NJ 08540

Mindstyles

Gregorc Style Delineator, Gregorc Associates, Inc., Box 351, Columbia, CT 06237-9975

**Cognitive**:

Myers Briggs Type Inventory

Consulting Psychologists Press, 577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306

**Affective:**

Conceptual Level

Ontario Inst. for Studies in Educ., 252 Bloor St., West, Toronto, Ont. M5S IV6

# Print Resources

Gardner, H. (1983). Frames of mind. New York: Basic Books

Lawrence, G. (1979). People types & tiger stripes. Gainesville, FL: Applications of Psychological Type, Inc.

Piscitelli, S. (1997). I don't need this stuff! Or do I?: A study skills and time management book. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace..

Reiff, J. C. (1992). Learning styles. Washington, DC: National Education Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 340 506).

Student learning styles and brain behavior. (1982). Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

# Internet Resources

http://www.learnersdimension.com
http://www.pls-ed.com/styles.htm
http://www.wavefront.com/~nelson/styles.htm
http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/~ggay/lstylstd.htm

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Last updated 3/2/97 by Kristin J. Alvarez

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G. Reid Lyon

# Why Reading Is Not a Natural Process

Nearly four decades of scientific research on how children learn to read supports an emphasis on phoneme awareness and phonics in a literature-rich environment. These findings challenge the belief that children learn to read naturally.

I am frequently asked why the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) conducts and supports research in reading, given that the NICHD is part of the National Institutes of Health, a federal agency that emphasizes basic biomedical science and health-related research. A primary answer is that learning to read is critical to a child's overall well-being. If a youngster does not learn to read in our literacy-driven society, hope for a fulfilling, productive life diminishes. In short, difficulties learning to read are not only an educational problem, they constitute a serious public health concern.

The NICHD has been studying normal reading development and reading difficulties for 35 years. NICHD-supported researchers have studied more than 10,000 children, published more than 2,500 articles, and written more than 50 books that present the results of 10 large-scale longitudinal studies and more than 1,500 smaller scale experimental and cross-sectional studies. Many of the longitudinal research sites initiated studies in the early 1980s with kindergarten children before they began their reading instruction and have studied the children over time. Researchers have studied some children for 15 years, with several sites following the youngsters for at least 5 years. Additional research sites have joined within the past 3 years to investigate the effects of different reading instructional programs with kindergarten and 1st grade children. At most research sites, multidisciplinary research teams study cognitive, linguistic, neurobiological, genetic, and instructional factors related to early reading development and reading difficulties.[1]

## Reading Research and Scientific Tradition

The NICHD reading research has centered on three basic questions: (1) How do children learn to read English (and other languages)? What are the critical skills, abilities, environments, and instructional interactions that foster the fluent reading of text? (2) What skill deficits and environmental factors impede reading development? (3) For which children are which instructional approaches most beneficial, at which stages of reading development? Before summarizing findings related to these questions, I would like to explain the NICHD research process.

First, the NICHD reading research program is rooted in scientific tradition and the scientific method. The program rests on systematic, longitudinal, field-based investigations,

cross-sectional studies, and laboratory-based experiments that are publicly verifiable and replicable. Second, the research integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to increase the richness, impact, and ecological validity of the data. However, using qualitative research methods requires the same scientific rigor employed in quantitative studies. Third, the NICHD reading research program is only one of many programs dedicated to understanding reading development and difficulties. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Research and Improvement, the Office of Special Education Programs, and the Canadian Research Council have supported many outstanding reading researchers (see Adams 1990 for a research review).

The cumulative work of federally and privately funded researchers illuminates how children develop reading skills, why some children struggle to learn to read, and what can be done to help all readers reach proficiency. Although much remains to be learned, many findings have survived scrutiny, replication, and extension.

## The Critical Role of Phonemic Awareness

How do children learn to read English? Reading is the product of decoding and comprehension (Gough et al. 1993). Although this sounds simple, learning to read is much tougher than people think. To learn to decode and read printed English, children must be aware that spoken words are composed of individual sound parts termed phonemes. This is what is meant by *phoneme awareness*.

Phoneme awareness and phonics are not the same. When educators assess phoneme awareness skills, they ask children to demonstrate knowledge of the sound structure of words *without any letters or written words present*. For example, "What word would be left if the /k/ sound were taken away from *cat*?" "What sounds do you hear in the word *big*?" To assess phonics skills, they ask children to link sounds (phonemes) *with letters*. Thus, the development of phonics skills depends on the development of phoneme awareness.

Why is phoneme awareness critical in beginning reading, and why is it difficult for some children? Because to read an alphabetic language like English, children must know that written spellings systematically represent spoken sounds. When youngsters figure this out, either on their own or with direct instruction, they have acquired the alphabetic principle. However, if beginning readers have difficulty perceiving the sounds in spoken words--for example, if they cannot "hear" the /at/ sound in *fat* and *cat* and perceive that the difference lies in the first sound--they will have difficulty decoding or sounding out new words. In turn, developing reading fluency will be difficult, resulting in poor comprehension, limited learning, and little enjoyment.

We are beginning to understand why many children have difficulty developing phoneme awareness. When we speak to one another, the individual sounds (phonemes) within the words are not consciously heard by the listener. Thus, no one ever receives any "natural" practice understanding that words are composed of smaller, abstract sound units.

For example, when one utters the word *bag*, the ear hears only one sound, not three (as in /b/-/a/-/g/). This is because when *bag* is spoken, the /a/ and /g/ phonemes are folded into the

initial /b/ sound. Thus, the acoustic information presented to the ears reflects an overlapping bundle of sound, not three discrete sounds. This process ensures rapid, efficient communication. Consider the time it would take to have a conversation if each of the words we uttered were segmented into their underlying sound structure.

However, nature has provided a conundrum here: What is good for the listener is not so good for the beginning reader. Although spoken language is seamless, the beginning reader must detect the seams in speech, unglue the sounds from one another, and learn which sounds (phonemes) go with which letters. We now understand that specific systems in the brain recover sounds from spoken words, and just as in learning any skill, children understand phoneme awareness with different aptitudes and experiences.

## Developing Automaticity and Understanding

In the initial stages of reading development, learning phoneme awareness and phonics skills *and* practicing these skills with texts is critical. Children must also acquire fluency and automaticity in decoding and word recognition. Consider that a reader has only so much attention and memory capacity. If beginning readers read the words in a laborious, inefficient manner, they cannot remember what they read, much less relate the ideas to their background knowledge. Thus, the ultimate goal of reading instruction--for children to understand and enjoy what they read--will not be achieved.

Reading research by NICHD and others reveals that "making meaning" requires more than phoneme awareness, phonics, and reading fluency, although these are necessary skills. Good comprehenders link the ideas presented in print to their own experiences. They have also developed the necessary vocabulary to make sense of the content being read. Good comprehenders have a knack for summarizing, predicting, and clarifying what they have read, and many are adept at asking themselves guide questions to enhance understanding.

## Linguistic Gymnastics

Programmatic research over the past 35 years *has not* supported the view that reading development reflects a *natural process*--that children learn to read as they learn to speak, through natural exposure to a literate environment. Indeed, researchers have established that certain aspects of learning to read are highly unnatural. Consider the linguistic gymnastics involved in recovering phonemes from speech and applying them to letters and letter patterns. Unlike learning to speak, beginning readers must appreciate consciously what the symbols stand for in the writing system they learn (Liberman 1992).

Unfortunately for beginning readers, written alphabetic symbols are arbitrary and are created differently in different languages to represent spoken language elements that are themselves abstract. If learning to read were natural, there would not exist the substantial number of cultures that have yet to develop a written language, despite having a rich oral language. And, if learning to read unfolds naturally, why does our literate society have so many youngsters and adults who are illiterate?

Despite strong evidence to the contrary, many educators and researchers maintain the

perspective that reading is an almost instinctive, natural process. They believe that explicit instruction in phoneme awareness, phonics, structural analysis, and reading comprehension strategies is unnecessary because oral language skills provide the reader with a meaning-based structure for the decoding and recognition of unfamiliar words (Edelsky et al. 1991, Goodman 1996).

Scientific research, however, simply does not support the claim that context and authentic text are a proxy for decoding skills. To guess the pronunciation of words from context, the context must predict the words. But content words--the most important words for text comprehension--can be predicted from surrounding context only 10 to 20 percent of the time (Gough et al. 1981). Instead, the choice strategy for beginning readers is to decode letters to sounds in an increasingly complete and accurate manner (Adams 1990, Foorman et al. 1998).

Moreover, the view some whole language advocates hold that skilled readers gloss over the text, sampling only parts of words, and examining several lines of print to decode unfamiliar words, is not consistent with available data. Just and Carpenter (1987), among others, have demonstrated consistently that good readers rarely skip over words, and readers gaze directly at most content words. Indeed, in contrast to conventional wisdom, less-skilled readers depend on context for word-recognition. The word recognition processes of skilled readers are so automatic that they do not need to rely on context (Stanovich et al. 1981). Good readers employ context to aid overall comprehension, but not as an aid in the recognition of unfamiliar words. Whether we like it or not, an alphabetic cipher must be deciphered, and this requires robust decoding skills.

The scientific evidence that refutes the idea that learning to read is a *natural process* is of such magnitude that Stanovich (1994) wrote:

That direct instruction in alphabetic coding facilitates early reading acquisition is one of the most well established conclusions in all of behavioral science. . . . The idea that learning to read is just like learning to speak is accepted by no responsible linguist, psychologist, or cognitive scientist in the research community (pp. 285-286).

Why Some Children Have Difficulties Learning to Read

Good readers are phonemically aware, understand the alphabetic principle, apply these skills in a rapid and fluent manner, possess strong vocabularies and syntactical and grammatical skills, and relate reading to their own experiences. Difficulties in any of these areas can impede reading development. Further, learning to read begins far before children enter formal schooling. Children who have stimulating literacy experiences from birth onward have an edge in vocabulary development, understanding the goals of reading, and developing an awareness of print and literacy concepts.

Conversely, the children who are most at risk for reading failure enter kindergarten and the elementary grades without these early experiences. Frequently, many poor readers have not consistently engaged in the language play that develops an awareness of sound structure and language patterns. They have limited exposure to bedtime and laptime reading. In short, children raised in poverty, those with limited proficiency in English, those from homes where

the parents' reading levels and practices are low, and those with speech, language, and hearing handicaps are at increased risk of reading failure.

However, many children with robust oral language experience, average to above average intelligence, and frequent early interactions with literacy activities also have difficulties learning to read. Why? Programmatic longitudinal research, including research supported by NICHD, clearly indicates that deficits in the development of phoneme awareness skills not only predict difficulties learning to read, but they also have a negative effect on reading acquisition. Whereas phoneme awareness is necessary for adequate reading development, it is not sufficient. Children must also develop phonics concepts and apply these skills fluently in text. Although substantial research supports the importance of phoneme awareness, phonics, and the development of speed and automaticity in reading, we know less about how children develop reading comprehension strategies and semantic and syntactic knowledge. Given that some children with well developed decoding and word-recognition abilities have difficulties understanding what they read, more research in reading comprehension is crucial.

## From Research to Practice

Scientific research can inform beginning reading instruction. We know from research that reading is a language-based activity. Reading does not develop naturally, and for many children, specific decoding, word-recognition, and reading comprehension skills must be taught directly and systematically. We have also learned that preschool children benefit significantly from being read to. The evidence suggests strongly that educators can foster reading development by providing kindergarten children with instruction that develops print concepts, familiarity with the purposes of reading and writing, age-appropriate vocabulary and language comprehension skills, and familiarity with the language structure.

Substantial evidence shows that many children in the 1st and 2nd grades and beyond will require explicit instruction to develop the necessary phoneme awareness, phonics, spelling, and reading comprehension skills. But for these children, this will not be sufficient. For youngsters having difficulties learning to read, each of these foundational skills should be taught and integrated into textual reading formats to ensure sufficient levels of fluency, automaticity, and understanding.

## Moving Beyond Assumptions

One hopes that scientific research informs beginning reading instruction, but it is not always so. Unfortunately, many teachers and administrators who could benefit from research to guide reading instructional practices do not yet trust the idea that research can inform their teaching. There are many reasons for this lack of faith. As Mary Kennedy (1997) has pointed out, it is difficult for teachers to apply research information when it is of poor quality, lacks authority, is not easily accessible, is communicated in an incomprehensible manner, and is not practical. Moreover, the lack of agreement about reading development and instruction among education leaders does not bode favorably for increasing trust. The burden to produce compelling and practical information lies with reading researchers.

Most great scientific discoveries have come from a willingness and an ability to be wrong.

Researchers and teachers could serve our children much better if they had the courage to set aside assumptions when they are not working. What if the assumption that reading is a natural activity, as appealing as it may be, were wrong and not working to help our children read? The fundamental purpose of science is to test our beliefs and intuitions and to tell us where the truth lies. Indeed, the education of our children is too important to be determined by anything but the strongest of objective scientific evidence. Our children deserve nothing less. *

[1] See Fletcher and Lyon (in press) and Lyon and Moats (1997) for reviews of NICHD reading research findings. Contact the author for a complete set of references of published research from all NICHD reading research sites since 1963.

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# Fostering High Levels of Reading and Learning in Secondary Students

*An Invited Commentary*

Michael F. Graves
University of Minnesota

*Note:* This display is intended for reading on screen, rather than for downloading and printing. For best viewing, adjust your browser window so it fills the full width of your monitor. If, after reading the commentary, you would like to print a copy, go to http://www.readingonline.org/graves/mainnoframe.html (for the main text in a "no frames" version), http://www.readingonline.org/graves/annotated.html (for the annotated list of websites), or http://www.readingonline.org/graves/references.html (for the annotated reference list), and use the Print command in your browser software. A link to each of these documents is found at the end of the text.

After reading this commentary, please visit the online discussion forum to share your comments. For a list of related postings, click here.

When this piece airs, or does whatever an online article does when it actually goes online, I will have been at the University of Minnesota for 29 years, having been hired as an assistant professor in the Department of Secondary Education in September 1970. A lot has, of course, changed in those 29 years -- at the University of Minnesota, in the world of reading, and in the world of learning more generally. At the university, the Department of Secondary Education has been absorbed into the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. In the world of reading, skills management systems and scope and sequences have disappeared, while whole language, literature-based instruction, the reading wars, phonemic awareness, balanced instruction, and a host of other concerns, causes, and conflicts have emerged. And in the world of learning, the cognitive revolution and schema theory are now part of the old guard, while constructivism, situated learning, and sociocultural concerns are just a few of the new features of today's learning landscape.

But one thing has not changed. Reading for secondary students -- in fact, reading for students beyond the

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primary and lower elementary grades -- gets relatively little attention. Here in the United States, as elsewhere around the world, there is widespread acceptance of the importance of higher levels of literacy for students, levels that can only be achieved across the years of elementary *and* secondary school -- and beyond. Yet despite this acceptance, most educators, researchers, and policy makers focus their attention on the lower grades. For example, the report on reading most often cited in the U.S. literature at the moment, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), concentrates on preschool through third grade; the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, the national reading research center funded by the U.S. federal government, focuses on beginning reading; and the most recent "What's Hot, What's Not" poll in *Reading Today* (Cassidy & Cassidy, 1999) lists phonemic awareness as the hottest of hot topics.

The amount of attention given to secondary students is not, of course, going to be hugely influenced by this brief commentary. Nevertheless, two contemporary constructs that have the potential to change the way secondary teachers teach seem well worth highlighting. These are the "teaching for understanding" approach and the concept of scaffolding students' learning. I will address the first of these topics here and the second in an upcoming commentary.

## Teaching for Understanding

Over the past decade or so, several groups of educators and researchers have given considerable attention to teaching for understanding. These include John Bransford and the Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt (in press); Ann Brown, Joseph Campione, and colleagues at the University of California at Berkeley (Brown & Campione, 1996); Fred Newmann and his colleagues at the University of Wisconsin (Newmann, Secada, & Wehlange, 1995); Grant Wiggins and his colleagues working with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Wiggins, 1989, Wiggins & McTighe, 1998); and David Perkins and his colleagues working with Harvard's Project Zero (Blythe, 1998, Perkins, 1992, Wiske, 1998). Perkins' approach is the one that has been described most completely in the literature, the one I am most familiar with, and the one I will describe here. However, I would stress that each of these approaches has a number of exciting and innovative features and is well worth serious study.

A large part of understanding Perkins' notion of teaching for understanding and its importance is the realization that in some ways schooling is not going well even for our best students, that all too few students attain the deep level of understanding critical in today's world (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999, Bruer, 1994, Perkins, 1992, Resnick, 1987, Ryder & Graves, 1998). Recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress strongly support these scholars' contention. For example, of the 12th graders tested, only 6 percent reached the advanced level in reading (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999), only 3 percent reached the advanced level in science (O'Sullivan, Reese, & Mazzeo, 1997), and only 1 percent reached the advanced level in history (Goodman, Lazer, Mazzeo, Mead, & Pearlmutter, 1998).

Understanding, explains Perkins (1992), enables a person "to explain, muster evidence, find examples, generalize, apply concepts, analogize, represent in a new way, and so on" (p. 13). To teach for understanding, he continues, we must go beyond simply presenting students with information; we must ensure that they accomplish three tasks:

1. Students must retain important information.
2. Students must understand topics deeply.

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3. Students must actively use the knowledge they gain.

In order to assist students in attaining such understanding, Perkins and others argue that we need to teach far fewer topics than we are currently teaching but to teach them far more thoroughly than we typically do. More specifically, Perkins suggests that a substantial amount of our teaching should be done in fairly lengthy units with several specific features. He delineates these features in a four-part framework:

- generative topics
- understanding goals
- understanding performances
- ongoing assessment

If we are going to teach far fewer topics, then we had better choose those topics wisely. This is where the concept of generative topics -- topics that are accessible and central to the subject area students are studying, but can also connect to many other topics both in and beyond that subject area -- comes in. Generative topics can be concepts, themes, procedures, historical periods, theories, ideas, and the like.

For example, consider the concept of plot. Plot is central to the study of literature; it is an important element in many types of literature and in many individual pieces of literature. But it also exists outside of literature. Historical episodes -- for example, the U.S. Civil War -- basically follow a plot, as do our lives.

As another example, consider the concept of cause and effect, which is central to much of history and literature but, like the generative topic of plot, also exists in areas outside of one or two subject areas. In fact, many (if not most) fields of study -- science, the humanities, and art, for example -- deal with cause and effect. As still another example, consider the idea of beauty, a central concept in art and literature that also plays an important role in our lives and even in science. Frank Press (1984), a past-president of the National Academy of Sciences, once spoke of the discovery of the double helix as not only rational, but beautiful.

While generative topics are a good starting point, one problem is that they are often too broad. Beauty, for example, could be studied in any age, in any medium, and in almost any field. Even though units in teaching for understanding may last two to six weeks (or longer), the time available is finite, and we almost always need to select parts of a generative topic to deal with and identify some specific goals to be attained. For example, one possible understanding goal for tenth graders studying the idea of beauty might be for students to understand that conceptions of physical beauty have changed over time -- that, for example, an ancient Roman's idea of beauty differed from that held by Italians during the Renaissance and from that held by Italians today. Another possible understanding goal for these tenth graders might be to understand that the idea of physical beauty differs from culture to culture and even from individual to individual. Or consider the generative topic of the democratic electoral process, being explored by a group of ninth graders. Of course, the students will be able to deal only with some aspects of this complex topic. In this case, one goal might be for students to gain a general understanding of elections; another might be to understand the major issues in a particular campaign.

These goals are, in fact, those developed by Megan Briggs and Don Perkins (no relation to Harvard's David Perkins), two social studies teachers who designed an understanding unit titled "The Election Process and Campaigns of 1996." The unit was developed for typical classes of ninth graders and involved students in a variety of interesting, meaningful, and creative instructional activities over a period



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of about four weeks. To demonstrate their mastery of these understanding goals, students took part in a number of what David Perkins terms "understanding performances." Fairly early in the election unit, students demonstrated their understanding of voting requirements by creating webs on the topic. Later, they demonstrated their understanding of referenda by actually developing a few to propose to their school. And still later, they demonstrated their ability to locate information on political questions by searching the Internet to obtain a sample of media responses to major campaign issues. Note that students engaged in these understanding performances throughout the unit. This is important. Students should be engaged in understanding performances throughout the period that they are studying a topic and not, as is so frequently the case, by being asked to produce a product only at the end of the unit.

The final part of Perkins' framework, ongoing assessment, is closely related to students' participation in understanding performances. Just as students should be engaged in understanding performances throughout the unit, students and teachers should be engaged in ongoing assessment. One of the things that teachers consider here is students' understanding performances -- for example, assessing whether the referenda students developed were good examples. If some were not, then the students who created them need feedback and some reteaching -- and they need these things early on, so that they do not continue through the unit with misconceptions that can cause confusion and thwart learning of other concepts.

Each of the understanding performances students undertake offers additional opportunities for ongoing assessment, and for feedback and reteaching as needed. However, ongoing assessment is not limited to understanding performances. At all points in the unit and with various techniques -- during individual conferences, small group discussions, writing assignments, or other events -- it is important to assess whether students understand and to be ready to assist them in reaching understanding if they are experiencing problems. As Perkins and Blythe (1993) put it, "To learn for understanding, students need criteria, feedback, and opportunities for reflection from the beginning of and throughout any sequence of instruction" (p. 7).

Obviously, none of us would want to teach for *mis*understanding or to have in mind the goal of students' forgetting whatever we are teaching. Yet we know that in all too many cases, misunderstanding and forgetting take place. Teaching for understanding is hard. But by realizing that we can't teach everything -- or, to be more precise, that students can't learn, understand, and remember everything -- and by using tools such as Perkins' four-part framework in situations where they are appropriate, understanding is a goal we can help our students reach.

## How Does Reading Fit In?

Thus far, I have described the general concept of teaching for understanding, explained its critical importance in today's world, and given an overview of David Perkins' approach. I have not, however, discussed the role of reading in teaching for understanding or the influence a teaching for understanding orientation should have on the reading we include in secondary classrooms.

Reading plays an important and easily explained role in teaching for understanding, in that much of the learning that students do as they come to understand a topic should and will come from reading. Journals, books, and libraries hold much of the understanding -- or at least much of the information necessary to that understanding -- that humankind has accumulated over the millennia. At the same time, we in reading need to realize that reading is by no means the only way of acquiring information and coming to understand. Other media -- audiotapes, videotapes and motion pictures, the Internet, and even television



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-- are important sources of learning and understanding. So too are the other modes of communication -- speaking, listening, and writing. Both discussion and writing are, in fact, crucial to coming to understand topics, to demonstrating that understanding, and to communicating it to others. Even more important, *doing* something -- somehow participating in the realm one is seeking to understand -- is often a key to understanding. Thus, while reading plays a huge role in teaching for understanding, it is not the sole member of the cast.

The influence of a teaching for understanding orientation on the reading we include in secondary classrooms is equally straightforward. Generative topics and understanding goals should prompt much of the reading that students do. This means that in classrooms where teachers teach for understanding, students will be reading about fewer topics, but they will be spending considerably more time on those topics.

It is vital that students get sufficient guidance in exploring the relatively small number of topics they will work with. Students need our support as they investigate and come to understand these topics. It is not nearly enough simply to help students identify important aspects of their topics and locate large amounts of information on them. Students also need models, modeling, coaching, prompting, encouragement, and feedback delivered at just the right time. In brief, they need a lot of scaffolding -- both specific scaffolding in reading (see, e.g., Graves & Graves, 1994) and other sorts scaffolding (see, e.g., Hogan & Pressley, 1997). Students engaged in learning for understanding will also profit from instruction -- more instruction, I believe, than is typically suggested in the teaching for understanding literature. Finally, classrooms where teaching for understanding is going on should put a premium on scaffolding and instruction that prepares students to identify generative topics and understanding goals themselves, and to become independent in researching and coming to understand those topics. Providing these sorts of scaffolding and instruction will be the topic of my next commentary.

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William P. Bintz

My nightmare is that I am insecure because as an English teacher somehow I am expected to know about reading [illegible] at the college level I was not trained in English content [high school English teacher, 1996]

My nightmare is that many middle school students aren't reading at grade level [illegible] they are won't read the class assignments anyway. Consequently, I find myself trying to avoid getting students involved in reading by assigning as little reading as possible, I teach around reading in order to make sure students understand science [middle school science teacher, 1996]

I have been a middle grade and high school English language arts teacher for over 10 years. During this time I have had many nightmares like the ones above lurking in my reading closet. One nightmare in particular just never seemed to go away.

# Exploring reading nightmares of middle and secondary school teachers

*Teachers often feel unable or unwilling to teach reading in the content areas. By viewing reading as a lifelong process, these teachers can begin to support one another in helping students become better readers.*

I was educated as a middle and secondary school English teacher. This experience taught me, among other things, how to plan reading assignments for junior and senior high school students. Unfortunately, it didn't teach me how to deal with students who were not very interested in or very good at reading these assignments. Many students flatly refused to read them. Others read the material, but only reluctantly, and more out of fear of reprisal from their parents for not completing their assignments than out of a burning desire to learn specific information. Still others read the material, but understood very little.

Even worse, this experience didn't teach me how to deal with students who wanted to read the assignments but struggled because they weren't very good readers. I didn't know how to help them because my teacher education program included no courses in reading. I knew that reading was critical to my content area, yet I knew very little about the reading process. Over time, I became increasingly frustrated and ineffective. Finally, I realized that I needed to learn more about the nature of reading.

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Moreover, in a survey of the current status of reading in middle, junior, and senior high schools in one state, Humphrey (1992b, p. 2) reported the following:

- Teachers said that, on average, they spend less than 4 hours per year in staff development activities related to reading, including conferences, college or university classes, visitations, and locally sponsored meetings.
- Prior to the advent of junior high schools in the 1940s, most students had a reading period every day from the first through the eighth grades. Today, older students do not participate in reading classes or, when they do, they spend less time than in the past because reading has been merged with English language arts. Almost one out of every five middle, junior, and senior high school students was not enrolled in a class where reading was emphasized during the 1991 school year.
- Thirty-eight percent of students whose reading ability falls two or more grade levels below their actual placement are not provided any special assistance. A quarter of the surveyed schools do not have remedial programs, while the others do not have enough support to provide help to all the students who need it. High schools offer the least assistance.
- Most of the schools surveyed reported that they provide neither programs that encourage teachers to share and discuss books nor programs that allow them to stress the value of reading books.
- Middle grades schools spend, on average, US$1.92 per student per year on reading materials other than textbooks—less than the cost of one paperback.

## Reading nightmares in reading education

Reading education, as a professional field of study, has also been plagued by nightmares. For instance, consider that over 50 years ago Bond and Bond (1941) stated, "The fact that in the secondary school the continued improvement in reading has been left to chance is a dark cloud on the reading horizon. No better results should be expected from this procedure than from leaving a vegetable garden to grow by itself without any outside care after it is once started" (p. 531).

These educators were challenging a number of important assumptions about reading and reading instruction. These assumptions include (a) Reading instruction is primarily, if not exclusively, the role of elementary, not middle and secondary, school teachers, and (b) reading is an isolated skill; once it is mastered in the elementary grades, students require no further direct instruction in the upper grade levels.

What is nightmarish is that these assumptions, and many others like them, remain prevalent in middle and secondary school. It is assumed that providing reading instruction is the job of elementary, not secondary, teachers, and that students should be entering junior and senior high school already knowing how to read proficiently and strategically. But they aren't.

In addition, consider the following. In 1963, Umans wrote, "One of the most difficult tasks is to help subject-matter teachers see the necessity of teaching skills directly related to the reading of the particular subject. Somehow, the feeling persists that reading is always taught elsewhere and at another time" (p. 7).

Similarly, in 1965, Andresen (in Burnett, 1966) stated, "High school teachers must face their responsibilities as teachers of reading as well as teachers of history, literature, science, and homemaking if they are to prepare students for the demands of further education or for the experience of life" (p. 323).

In 1964, Artley (in Burnett, 1966) wrote, "Secondary reading is changing as large numbers of secondary school people—administrators, curriculum consultants and coordinators, teachers, and reading specialists—are beginning to concede that to accept anything less than the eventual involvement of every teacher in the reading program of the high school is to fall short of meeting the needs of today's students" (p. 323).

In 1965, Summers (see also Muskopf & Robinson, 1966, p. 76) stated, "Perhaps the most immediate concern in meeting the reading needs of secondary



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## Teacher voices across the curriculum

| Content area | Reading nightmares | Reading pluses | Reading questions | Reading wishes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Science | My nightmare is reading comprehension. Students don't comprehend well because many are very behind with reading abilities to begin with, plus a majority of science textbooks are written on a level well above most high school students (HS) | Using groups to do reading assignments and tying assignments to everyday life | Why can't the state revise its textbook adoption list? How can I get students to read assignments in science textbooks when the text can often be very difficult to understand | I wish that all kids coming to us could read. I also wish that all students would strive for learning and read instead of watching television and playing video games |
| | I have a two-part nightmare. One: very few of my students will actually read the textbook. They depend on me for lecture notes or simply read a question and search for similar words in the text. Two: most students are not intrigued with science literature. They pass it off as boring. I feel this may come due to their lack of vocabulary and reading skills (HS) | Using role-playing models, getting students to read an article dealing with science and then describe what it has to do with their life and writing a children's science book and illustrating it | How can I get information across without reading? How do I make factual reading more interesting? | I wish every student would come to high school [illegible] to learn like small children are |
| Math | My nightmare is that students will have trouble comprehending and I won't know how to help them, and/or students won't be motivated to read and I'll have to make them (MS) | Exploring article language and selecting materials that related to students' and teachers' [illegible] | How can I use children's books in math? How can I teach reading in my math class without getting away from the math material I'm supposed to teach? | I wish I knew how to teach reading and math together |
| | Having uninteresting textbooks and no experience choosing material that gets students involved and reaches all levels of students (MS) | [illegible] increasing the use of word problems that reflect everyday life | How do I get more involvement in reading when I don't read much myself? | I wish to have total class participation |
| | Working with students with large differences in reading ability, being able to help poor readers enjoy reading which, in turn, will keep their attention and helping students use reading to broaden their interests (MS) | I am trying to spark student interest by finding more interesting reading materials | How do I learn about strategies that incorporate reading and math? | I wish that all students enjoyed reading and were competent readers. This would make teaching subjects a lot easier |
| | My main nightmare is students struggling in math because they aren't being able to read and understand the problem, and I don't have time to go back and teach them how to comprehend what they are reading (HS) | Many students can read what they want to read all the time. I try to make them put down their books in order to have math class | How am I able to help students comprehend what they are reading when no one else has? | I wish elementary teachers would recognize problems in reading and correct them early |
| | Many students make it [illegible] elementary and middle school and still don't know how to read. Others can sound out all the words but they don't understand what it means | I am having students restate word problems in their own words | How do I have time to work on reading when I don't have time to present the subject matter I teach? Do other math teachers have trouble incorporating reading into math? | I wish I had more resources for reading in math. Also, I wish I had an English teacher with my class to help with reading and writing |

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(continued)

## Teacher voices across the curriculum (cont'd.)

| Content area | Reading nightmares | Reading pluses | Reading questions | Reading wishes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social studies | Students don't read assigned materials. Often reading a textbook chapter brings a "I'd rather take a zero" from most students. Social studies is not the least bit interesting to students. (HS) | Doing journal writing, reading newspapers and making children's books about historical people and events. | How can I get students to read something and relate the information to the class? | I wish all students had that certain something inside themselves to motivate themselves and realize the importance of education and how much they're missing now instead of realizing it later on in life. |
| | There are so many students in my classes who are not proficient readers. They are so far behind many of the other students that they have basically given up and have quit trying in school. (HS) | I am allowing them more time to read in class. | How can I reach those students who have little ability in reading and also supply the needs of those students who are proficient readers? | I want to be effective in helping students to understand the importance of it [reading] enough that they will be interested in reading about it. |
| | My nightmare is that I really don't know how to choose literature that both the high and low level children can enjoy and understand. (MS) | Literature today seems more diverse and there is more integration in the classroom. | How do you find a balance between assigning good literature and assigning literature that will be of interest to students? | I wish history teachers would incorporate more fiction literature into the curriculum. |
| | My nightmare is not only that I might have a student who can't read, but also students who read better than I do. While reading out loud I am afraid I will stammer, stutter or mispronounce a word. (MS) | Getting aside time for reading and making books accessible to all ranges of students. | How do I get students to read when they are so apathetic? How can I get my students interested in reading about history when most history books are so boring and that's why students have such dislike for the subject? | I wish that I can instill in my students a love for reading. |
| English | Students are not motivated to read the assignments I give, or if they do read they are often misinformed or get a confusing idea of the material. (MS) | Using prereading strategies and guiding questions during free reading time. | How do I make sure that students grasp the important concepts in reading? | I want to be able to motivate students to want to read for more than just because they have to. |
| | My nightmare is that kids will leave this high school and never read again because they don't value reading. It doesn't seem important to them. (HS) | Using reading logs, reading aloud and integrating reading and writing. | How do we teachers get away from depending on only one way of teaching reading? | I wish that every teacher regardless of the content area would recognize the importance of reading. |
| | My nightmare is that students can read the words on the page but have difficulty comprehending what they are reading. (HS) | Allowing students choice in required reading. Ownership is important in reading. | What is the best method for assessing reading comprehension? | I wish I had the power to motivate student to read and love it. |

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(continued)

and failure begets failure, until at the high school level students not only devalue, but virtually dismiss, reading as a tool to learn.

**Belief 2: "It's *a teacher thing...*"** Teachers in middle and secondary school believe some of the problems associated with reading are really a teaching thing. On the one hand, they believe that if students at age 16, for example, would bring to the classroom the same curiosity about reading and learning that children do at age 6, then they would not have to deal with reading at all. However, since it is clear that reading needs to be addressed, they prefer that others deal with the problem (e.g., "I wish I had an English teacher with my class to help with reading and writing"). Few believe that all teachers are ultimately teachers of reading, despite the obvious need to be so.

Teachers expressed a number of personal and professional reasons for having difficulty dealing with reading. Surprisingly, many teachers do not necessarily see themselves as voracious and sophisticated readers, unless perhaps when reading in their specific content area. Not surprisingly, then, they find it difficult to see themselves teaching reading, much less being able to motivate others to read.

It is also not surprising that at a professional level teachers express betrayal, frustration, and confusion. In an interesting turn of events, it is now teachers who feel at risk. Teachers feel betrayed because they were given no formal knowledge of reading in their teacher education training, frustrated because they have no personal experience with the teaching of reading, and confused because the number of reading specialists in schools is being reduced at the same time administrators are calling for improvements in reading scores. Moreover, teachers feel overwhelmed because they were trained and hired to teach content, but are now being asked to also teach reading.

The bottom line is that teachers feel they are being asked to teach what they do not know how to teach, in addition to an already bloated curriculum in their content area. Individuals who know the least about reading are being asked to teach reading to students who need it the most.

**Belief 3: "It's *a textbook thing...*"** Teachers also believe that reading problems may be related to textbooks. Increasing numbers of teachers are starting to seriously question the efficacy of using a single text as the basis for instruction in content areas. Teachers believe that many textbooks are written at a level far above the current reading abilities of students, and thus are unnecessarily confusing and complex. They also believe that textbooks are strictly content driven, and therefore are boring and uninteresting to students.

In addition, teachers believe that the use of a single textbook is driven by a "one size fits all" mentality. The assumption is that one book can accommodate different personal interests and varied reading abilities. Teachers across the curriculum know firsthand that students bring with them into the classroom different histories of reading, and therefore different values about reading and the role it plays in their lives. They also know that a single textbook can't and doesn't accommodate the students' wide range of reading abilities. A more powerful assumption is that varied reading materials can better accommodate varied reading abilities.

What is problematic about this assumption is that for the most part middle and secondary school teachers have had little experience and even less formal education in selecting alternative or supplementary reading materials. Another problem is that in moving to a multiple-text versus a single-text mentality, teachers feel caught between (a) trying to accommodate students' reading needs while meeting the curricular demands of the school and (b) trying to balance reading of student-selected materials with teacher-assigned materials deemed important for content area knowledge.

**Belief 4: "It's *a somebody else thing...*"** Finally, middle and secondary school teachers believe parents, colleagues, and elementary school teachers contribute to the problem of reading in junior and senior high school. Parents, for example, do not seem to stress and support reading at home as in years past. Instead, reading at home has been replaced by watching television and playing video games to the point where reading struggles, mostly unsuccessfully, to compete for young people's time.

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Similarly, many teachers believe that colleagues do not recognize and stress the importance of reading and teaching reading across the curriculum in middle and secondary school. The pervasive view is that teachers don't and won't take responsibility for what they believe was the irresponsibility of others who were obviously remiss in their duty to teach children how to read. This view is perhaps best expressed by one high school teacher who stated: "It seems that not only am I now expected to teach what I don't know, which is reading, because those who preceded me didn't teach it, but also I am now being held accountable with reading, which is like me being held responsible for others' irresponsibility."

In many cases, the "others" referred to are elementary school teachers. To a large extent, upper level teachers believe that primary grade teachers simply aren't teaching children the basic skills of how to read, or are not recognizing and remediating reading problems early enough. As a result, when elementary teachers promote children who can't or don't like to read, middle and secondary school teachers feel they, not parents or the elementary teachers, have to suffer the consequences.

## Exploring new possibilities

I began this article by identifying some old reading nightmares of middle and secondary teachers. Their voices, heard collectively, represent a constellation of individual realities that up to this point depict the current status of reading mostly in terms of problems. Now I want to focus on exploring new possibilities because, as Harste (see Crafton et al., 1995) once stated, "When reality becomes synonymous with possibility, it is time to get out of the teaching profession." In essence, exploring new possibilities means creating new realities for teachers and students. To this end, I want to propose several starting points for seeing new possibilities in reading.

It seems obvious that colleges and universities need to reevaluate and rethink the role reading education plays within the teacher education curriculum. Otherwise, universities will continue to graduate students who are not only unaware of the nature of reading and the important role it plays in learning, but also ill-equipped to teach reading in a content area, much less across the curriculum. Clearly, preservice teachers need significantly more understanding of reading and experience teaching it to meet the complex demands of teaching reading in middle and secondary school. Therefore, universities need to increase the quantity and enhance the quality of experiences that preservice teachers have in teacher education programs.

Moreover, school districts and state departments of education need to reexamine the current level of commitment in the area of reading. Teachers need and want more information about and more experience with teaching reading. Otherwise, they will continue to feel uninformed and therefore unable to help those students who need help the most. Teachers will also continue to feel frustrated given the fact that, with or without additional help in reading, school districts and departments of education are still holding them accountable for students' reading across the content areas. Schools, school districts, and state departments of education also need to hold themselves accountable. This means providing ongoing professional development that will support teachers in better understanding the complex nature of reading and the art of teaching reading to adolescents in middle school and young adults in secondary school.

Schools can help themselves by intentionally and systematically making reading a high priority with students and teachers. Schools can intentionally create a climate that says to teachers in professional ways and to students in practical ways that we value reading in this school. For example, schools can (a) plan ongoing professional staff development for teachers in reading across the curriculum, (b) organize in-school programs that encourage students and teachers to read, (c) assist teachers in building collaborative relationships with representatives of trade-book companies to explore what reading materials beyond textbooks are currently available for use in the classroom, (d) create a faculty library replete with a variety of resources on recent advances in reading, reading instruction, and reading assessment in middle and secondary school, (e) invite teachers from across the curricu-



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lum to share reading strategies with colleagues at faculty meetings, and (f) provide teachers with time and encouragement to discuss with colleagues what new insights about reading and teaching they learned from trying new strategies in the classroom.

On a practical level, teachers can (a) use mini-lessons on reading as a part of their daily or weekly lesson plans, to provide powerful demonstrations to students of what good readers do when they read, (b) use different frameworks to support reading across the curriculum such as literature circles (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988), readers workshop (Atwell, 1987), reading aloud, paired reading, and reading response logs (Rief, 1992), (c) set up a Readers in Residence program as a part of a library media center in which student volunteers help other students with reading, and (d) begin faculty meetings and even the school day with an oral reading of a children's picture book, poem, short fable, or an excerpt from a short story, novel, or play. The idea here is to help teachers and students change their old perception of reading in order to create a new reality that sees reading less as a nagging problem and more as a tool for learning and thinking.

Changing perceptions of reading, however, is no small task. For instance, all too often teachers in middle and secondary schools assume that the solution to reading problems is primarily an instructional issue. That is, teachers feel they lack a variety of reading strategies that they could use to spark student interest, and this, in turn, could help them better comprehend written reading assignments. This assumption partially explains why teachers associated reading problems most often in terms of individual reading activities or specific reading programs (see Figure). These beliefs are important. They indicate that teachers are aware of reading problems and are exploring different strategies to incorporate reading into their content area. Perhaps teachers will start some new conversations about the power and potential of teaching reading across the curriculum based on their experiences using these strategies in the classroom.

Changing perceptions of reading, however, has to occur on at least two levels—the instructional and the other theoretical and curricular. Solving reading problems is not just a matter of teachers using more informed instructional techniques, although that is clearly a step in the right direction. It also involves a commitment by teachers to interrogate assumptions about learning and conceptions of curriculum that underpin different methods of reading instruction. Teachers should question to what extent these assumptions represent the best we currently know about learning and reading. The solution also requires teachers to see their instructional strategies as expressions of their personal values about how people learn in general and learn to read in particular, and to reflect on the extent to which these values reflect recent advances in learning and reading theory.

What teachers value most can be seen by looking at what they devote the most time to. Conversely, what teachers don't value tends not to be included in the curriculum or present in the classroom. In this instance, teacher voices across the curriculum echoed some discomfort with what they have valued over the years, and teachers are starting to change what they value most with reading. This shift was expressed by one high school teacher who said, "I've been a social studies teacher now for 25 years, and I'm starting to think that maybe, just maybe, students have a problem in reading because, as teachers, we've been valuing the wrong things all this time."

For instance, some teachers are placing more value on the social nature of reading, that is, on the idea that reading is not strictly an individual activity, but a social engagement. Others value integrating reading with other disciplines, such as writing, art, and drama. Still others are using a wider variety of materials and supporting self-selection and using reading materials that are personally meaningful and socially relevant to students.

Perhaps most important, however, is that teachers are placing more value on the notion that an interest in reading is ultimately an interest in learning. For instance, elementary, middle, and high school teachers all believe that learning to learn is a lifelong process, and that schools are designed to help students become more informed and more

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sophisticated learners as they progress through different grade levels. Teachers have not necessarily believed that learning to read is also a lifelong process and that one of the purposes of schools is to help students become more strategic readers. Rather, teachers have assumed that students learned to read in elementary school and then read to learn in middle and secondary school.

Now, middle and secondary school teachers are placing more value on the notion that learning to read and reading to learn are actually the same process. This means that individuals of all ages have the potential to learn about reading and from reading. In this sense, reading isn't something children learn to do just in elementary school. Rather, learning to read and reading to learn are interrelated processes that lifelong learners do to outgrow what they currently know and believe about the social world.

Interestingly enough, placing more value on the interrelationship between learning to read and reading to learn also opens up the door for new relationships between elementary school and middle and secondary school teachers. By seeing reading as a lifelong process, teachers in Grades K–12 can start some new conversations about how they can support one another in helping all students become better readers and better learners. Moreover, by seeing reading as a tool for learning, teachers can help one another not only to use reading to spark student interest in content area learning, but also to use content area learning to spark interest in reading.

In this sense, teaching reading in middle and secondary school isn't just an addition to an already bloated curriculum; it also provides the potential for teachers to use reading to create personally meaningful curriculum with students. In the long run, these new values may not be a cure for all our reading nightmares, but at least we will be able to teach better by day and sleep better at night.

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# Developing Reading Strategies

## Tokyo: Eichosha 1994 ISBN 4-268-00220-0 C3082

## by Kenji Kitao and S. Kathleen Kitao

(Last updated on July 5)

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### Introduction

The traditional way that Japanese students learn to read English is to re- place English words with Japanese words. This is not a good way to read En- glish passages for several reasons. It is slow and inefficient. It does not help you distinguish between more important and less important information. It does not help you use what you already know to understand the meaning of the reading passage.

When you read something, you should not just start at the beginning and read through to the end. This is not a good way to read, either. There are a number of reading strategies that you should use to read more efficiently and to understand what you read better. For example, you should first look over what you are going to read. You should look at the pictures, the title, etc., and think about what you already know about the subject. You should try to find the main idea and the ideas that support it. You should think about how ideas in the reading passage are related to one another and look for words and phrases that

give you clues to these relationships. You should also think about your pur- pose for reading. Are you looking for some specific information? Are you gathering general information? The different purposes you might be reading for influence how you read. All of these things will help you read better.

In some reading textbooks, you are asked to read passages and answer com- prehension questions about the reading. While such books have their usefulness, the design of this book is different. The purpose of this book is to make you aware of good strategies for reading. You should choose appropriate strategies to apply when you read.

At the beginning of each chapter, you will be given an explanation of the strategy you are learning in that chapter. There are reading passages and exer- cises to help you learn to understand and apply that skill. In some cases, there are exercises that review strategies introduced to in previous chapters. Vocabu- lary words that might be difficult are defined after each reading, and there are also comprehension questions, so you can check your understanding of the read- ing.

In addition, there are three review chapters. In these chapters, there is a reading passage and exercises to review strategies that you learned in the pre- vious chapters.

Reading passages include information about various countries. We hope that you will be open to learning about other cultures and interested in learning more about them.

To the Teacher

It is important to do the chapters in order. Review Exercises cover material introduced in previous chapters, so if the chapters are not done in order, stu- dents will not be able to do the review exercises.

We would like to express our appreciation to Jan Minagawa of Setsunan University, Sabrina Elizabeth Welch of Doshisha Women's College, and Mau- reen E. Davis of Kansai University of Foreign Studies for reading this textbook and making valuable comments.

S. Kathleen Kitao, PhD
Kenji Kitao, PhD

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## Chapter 2

## Skimming

In some cases, it is useful for you to be able to get the overall idea of a reading passage. What is this reading passage? What kind of information does it include? It is sometimes helpful to be able to answer these questions, for exam- ple, in order to decide whether you want to read a passage in more detail. This also helps you read better by letting you know what to expect. This skill is called skimming.

To get an overall idea of what a passage is about, you can look at the title, characteristics, etc. What type of reading passage is it? Is it a letter? a short story? an essay? a set of instructions? Next, you should look at some of the im- portant words, especially nouns and verbs. The point is to read quickly, not to look carefully at every word.

**Exercise A**
**Strategy Exercise--Skimming**

Read the following short passages. Write the letter of the passage in the blank beside the type of passage.

___ 1. a letter
___ 2. a set of instructions
___ 3. a diary entry
___ 4. part of a short story

___ 5. part of an essay
___ 6. a memo

(A) October 12, 1995
Today was my day off, so I did some shopping. Bought a new dress-- dark blue with white flowers. I think I'll wear it next weekend at the office party. I also stopped to visit Joan while I was in her neighborhood. She's been sick, but she looks a lot better today. In the evening, I wrote some letters to friends and watched TV.

(B) December 12, 1995

Dear Monica,

Thank you very much for your letter. It was good to hear from you. Just a short note in reply.

I was happy to hear that you will be in town in January. Please do call me when you arrive. We'll make arrangements to have dinner. In case you don't have my phone number, it's 780-7842. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Your friend,

Hallie

(C)

The Mysterious Woman

"Your 10:00 appointment is here," my secretary said on the phone.

"Send her in," I replied.

The door opened, and a blond woman entirely dressed in black walked through. "Thank you for seeing me," she said. Her voice was low and somehow rather sad.

"Please sit down, and tell me--why is it that you need to see a pri- vate detective?"

(D) Lemonade

Mix three cups of water, one cup lemon juice (about four lemons), and 1/2 cup of sugar. Serve over ice. Makes 5 glasses.

(E)
Date: July 20, 1994
To: All Department Heads
From: Allan Rider, Accounting
Re: Salary Report Form

Starting in August, a new form will be used to report employees' salaries. If there are any questions about

these forms, please call me at 4-6784.

(F) The Advantages of Using a Word Processor

Using a word processor for writing has a number of advantages. One of the biggest advantages is that the writer can quickly and easily make changes in what has been written. When using a typewriter, it is necessary to type large parts of the passage again if changes need to be made. However, with a word processor, changes can be made with little effort ...

**Exercise B**
**Strategy Exercise--Skimming**

Look at the reading passage and quickly answer the following questions. 1. What type of reading passage is this?

2. What city is the writer visiting?

3. During what month is the writer visiting that city?

Put the letter of the paragraph beside the best title for it.

___ 1. A Walking Tour of the Rocks
___ 2. Seeing the Harbor from Mrs. Macquarie's Point
___ 3. Seeing the Harbor from a Boat
___ 4. Visiting the Sydney Zoo
___ 5. Visiting the Town of Manly
___ 6. Touring the Opera House

Visiting Sydney

August 25

(A)

After arriving in Sydney at about 6:00 in the morning, we checked into our hotel and went on a boat around the harbor. Sydney is one of the most beauti- ful port cities in the world. We saw the beautiful Opera House and some is- lands. Later we went under the famous harbor bridge.

(B)

In the afternoon, we took a boat to Manly, a small town near the mouth of the harbor, located on a narrow neck of land between the harbor and the ocean. Manly has an oceanarium, a place where we can see many kinds of ocean fish. There are two glass tunnels in which you can walk under the water and watch the fish. We also walked across the narrow neck of land to see Manly's beach.

August 26

(C)

We started out with a walking tour of a part of Sydney called the Rocks. This was where Sydney was founded, with some of the oldest buildings in the city. Many of the buildings of the Rocks have been restored and are now shops, restaurants, etc.

(D)

In the afternoon, we had a tour of the interior of the Opera House. While it is definitely not as impressive as the outside, it was interesting and well de- signed. There are four halls, of which we were able to see three.

(E)

From the Opera House, we went to Mrs. Macquarie's Point. It is on an arm of land with an excellent view of the harbor. Mrs. Macquarie's husband was a colonial governor in the early 1800s, and she went to the point every day to see the beautiful view of the harbor.

August 27

(F)

In the morning, we went to the Sydney Zoo. It is located across the harbor, so we took a boat. From various points in the zoo, you can see beautiful views of the harbor, the opera house, the bridge, and the city center of Sydney. The most interesting animals were the native Australian animals.

[Vocabulary]
1. restored: put back in its original condition

Comprehension Questions

T F ? 1. The writer arrived in Sydney in the late afternoon.
T F ? 2. The writer likes the harbor.
T F ? 3. The writer went to Manly by bus.
T F ? 4. The trip to Manly took about thirty minutes.
T F ? 5. In Manly, the writer saw the oceanarium and the beach.
T F ? 6. The Rocks is the oldest part of Sydney.
T F ? 7. Some of the buildings in the Rocks have been fixed up to look like they originally did.
T F ? 8. The Opera House is as impressive inside as it is outside.
T F ? 9. Mrs. Macquarie's Point has a good view of the harbor.
T F ? 10. Mrs. Macquarie was a colonial governor.
T F ? 11. The zoo is across the harbor from Sydney.
T F ? 12. There were good views of the harbor from the zoo.

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# Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children

MUST READ

[Addressing the Needs of Children With Persistent Reading Difficulties ]

"THE MAJORITY OF READING PROBLEMS faced by today's adolescents & adults could have been avoided or resolved in the early years of childhood," according to a report released March 18 by the National Research Council (NRC).

The report, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children," calls for widespread reforms "to ensure that all children are equipped with the skills & instruction they need to learn to read."

Responding to the report, Secretary Riley said that "The Council's findings send the nation's parents & educators a clear signal that we need to move beyond the contentious reading debate in some communities & focus on how children learn to read." The Secretary went on to say that...

"The study clearly defines the key elements all children need in order to become good readers. Specifically, kids need to learn letters & sounds & how to read for meaning. They also need opportunities to practice reading with many types of books. While some children need more intensive & systematic individualized instruction than others, all children need these 3 essential elements in order to read well & independently by the end of 3rd grade. Effective teaching & extra resources can make it possible for many 'at-risk' children to become successful leaders."

An image version of the prepublication copy of the nearly 400-page report, is at:
http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/enter2.cgi?030906418X.html
The NRC press release is available at:
http://www2.nas.edu/whatsnew/286a.html
The Secretary's full statement is available at:
http://www.ed.gov/PressReleases/index.html

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Executive Summary
**"Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children."**

http://www.middleweb.com/ReadingNRC.html 10/2/99

Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns & Peg Griffin, Editors.
Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, National Research Council.
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## Executive Summary

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Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued & important for social & economic advancement. Of course, most children learn to read fairly well. In this report, we are most concerned with the large numbers of children in America whose educational careers are imperiled because they do not read well enough to ensure understanding & to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive economy. Current difficulties in reading largely originate from rising demands for literacy, not from declining absolute levels of literacy. In a technological society, the demands for higher literacy are ever increasing, creating more grievous consequences for those who fall short.

The importance of this problem led the U.S. Department of Education & the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services to ask the National Academy of Sciences to establish a committee to examine the prevention of reading difficulties. Our committee was charged with conducting a study of the effectiveness of interventions for young children who are at risk of having problems learning to read. The goals of the project were three: (1) to comprehend a rich but diverse research base; (2) to translate the research findings into advice & guidance for parents, educators, publishers, & others involved in the care & instruction of the young; & (3) to convey this advice to the targeted audiences through a variety of publications, conferences, & other outreach activities.

### The Committee's Approach

The committee reviewed research on normal reading development & instruction, on risk factors useful in identifying groups & individuals at risk of reading failure, & on prevention, intervention, & instructional approaches to ensuring optimal reading outcomes.

We found many informative literatures to draw on & have aimed in this report to weave together the insights of many research traditions into clear guidelines for helping children become successful readers. In doing so, we also considered the current state of affairs in education for teachers & others working with

young children; policies of federal, state, & local governments impinging on young children's education; the pressures on publishers of curriculum materials, texts, & tests; programs addressed to parents & to community action; and media activities.

Our main emphasis has been on the development of reading & on factors that relate to reading outcomes. We conceptualized our task as cutting through the detail of mostly convergent, but sometimes discrepant, research findings to provide an integrated picture of how reading develops & how its development can be promoted.

Our recommendations extend to all children. Granted, we have focused our lens on children at risk for learning to read. But much of the instructional research we have reviewed encompasses, for a variety of reasons, populations of students with varying degrees of risk. Good instruction seems to transcend characterizations of children's vulnerability for failure: the same good early literacy environment & patterns of effective instruction are required for children who might fail for different reasons.

Does this mean that the identical mix of instructional materials & strategies will work for each & every child? Of course not. If we have learned anything from this effort, it is that effective teachers are able to craft a special mix of instructional ingredients for every child they work with. But it does mean that there is a common menu of materials, strategies, & environments from which effective teachers make choices. This in turn means that, as a society, our most important challenge is to make sure that our teachers have access to those tools & the knowledge required to use them well. In other words, there is little evidence that children experiencing difficulties learning to read, even those with identifiable learning disabilities, need radically different sorts of supports than children at low risk, although they may need much more intensive support. Childhood environments that support early literacy development & excellent instruction are important for all children. Excellent instruction is the best intervention for children who demonstrate problems learning to read.

**Conceptualizing Reading & Reading Instruction**

Effective reading instruction is built on a foundation that recognizes that reading ability is determined by multiple factors: many factors that correlate with reading fail to explain it; many experiences contribute to reading development without being prerequisite to it; and although there are many prerequisites, none by itself is considered sufficient.

Adequate initial reading instruction requires that children:

* use reading to obtain meaning from print,
* have frequent & intensive opportunities to read,
* are exposed to frequent, regular spelling-sound relationships,
* learn about the nature of the alphabetic writing system, and
* understand the structure of spoken words.

Adequate progress in learning to read English (or any alphabetic language) beyond the initial level depends on:

* having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically,
* sufficient practice in reading to achieve fluency with different kinds of texts,
* sufficient background knowledge & vocabulary to render written texts meaningful & interesting,
* control over procedures for monitoring comprehension & repairing misunderstandings, and
* continued interest & motivation to read for a variety of purposes.

Reading skill is acquired in a relatively predictable way by children who have normal or above average language skills: have had experiences in early childhood that fostered motivation & provided exposure to literacy in use; get information about the nature of print through opportunities to learn letters & to recognize the internal structure of spoken words, as well as explanations about the contrasting nature of spoken & written language; and attend schools that provide effective reading instruction & opportunities to practice reading.

Disruption of any of these developments increases the possibility that reading will be delayed or impeded. The association of poor reading outcomes with poverty & minority status no doubt reflects the accumulated effects of several of these risk factors, including lack of access to literacy-stimulating preschool experiences & to excellent, coherent reading instruction. In addition, a number of children without any obvious risk factors also develop reading difficulties. These children may require intensive efforts at intervention & extra help in reading & accommodations for their disability throughout their lives.

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There are 3 potential stumbling blocks that are known to throw children off course on the journey to skilled reading. The first obstacle, which arises at the outset of reading acquisition, is difficulty understanding & using the alphabetic principle--the idea that written spellings systematically represent spoken words. It is hard to comprehend connected text if word

recognition is inaccurate or laborious. The second obstacle is a failure to transfer the comprehension skills of spoken language to reading & to acquire new strategies that may be specifically needed for reading. The third obstacle to reading will magnify the first two: the absence or loss of an initial motivation to read or failure to develop a mature appreciation of the rewards of reading.

As in every domain of learning, motivation is crucial. Although most children begin school with positive attitudes & expectations for success, by the end of the primary grades & increasingly thereafter, some children become disaffected. The majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents & adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years. It is imperative that steps be taken to ensure that children overcome these obstacles during the primary grades.

Reducing the number of children who enter school with inadequate literacy-related knowledge & skill is an important primary step toward preventing reading difficulties. Although not a panacea, this would serve to reduce considerably the magnitude of the problem currently facing schools. Children who are particularly likely to have difficulty with learning to read in the primary grades are those who begin school with less prior knowledge & skill in relevant domains, most notably, general verbal abilities, the ability to attend to the sounds of language as distinct from its meaning, familiarity with the basic purposes & mechanisms of reading, & letter knowledge. Children from poor neighborhoods, children with limited proficiency in English, children with hearing impairments, children with preschool language impairments, & children whose parents had difficulty learning to read are particularly at risk of arriving at school with weaknesses in these areas & hence of falling behind from the outset.

**Recommendations**

The critical importance of providing excellent reading instruction to all children is at the heart of the committee's recommendations. Accordingly, our central recommendation characterizes the nature of good primary reading instruction. We also recognize that excellent instruction is most effective when children arrive in first grade motivated for literacy & with the necessary linguistic, cognitive, & early literacy skills. We therefore recommend attention to ensuring high-quality preschool & kindergarten environments as well. We acknowledge that excellent instruction in the primary grades & optimal environments in preschool & kindergarten require teachers who are well prepared, highly knowledgeable, & receiving ongoing support.

Excellent instruction may be possible only if schools are organized in optimal ways; if facilities, curriculum materials, & support services function adequately; and if children's home languages are taken into account in designing instruction. We therefore make recommendations addressing these issues. (The complete text of all the committee's recommendations appears in Chapter 10.)

**Literacy Instruction in 1st Through 3rd Grade**

Given the centrality of excellent instruction to the prevention of reading difficulties, the committee strongly recommends attention in every primary grade classroom to the full array of early reading accomplishments: the alphabetic principle, reading sight words, reading words by mapping speech sounds to parts of words, achieving fluency, & comprehension. Getting started in alphabetic reading depends critically on mapping the letters & spellings of words onto the speech units that they represent; failure to master word recognition can impede text comprehension. Explicit instruction that directs children's attention to the sound structure of oral language & to the connections between speech sounds & spellings assists children who have not grasped the alphabetic principle or who do not apply it productively when they encounter unfamiliar printed words.

Comprehension difficulties can be prevented by actively building comprehension skills as well as linguistic & conceptual knowledge, beginning in the earliest grades. Comprehension can be enhanced through instruction focused on concept & vocabulary growth & background knowledge, instruction about the syntax & rhetorical structures of written language, & direct instruction about comprehension strategies such as summarizing, predicting, & monitoring. Comprehension also takes practice, which is gained by reading independently, by reading in pairs or groups, & by being read aloud to.

We recommend that 1st through 3rd grade curricula include the following components:

* Beginning readers need explicit instruction & practice that lead to an appreciation that spoken words are made up of smaller units of sounds, familiarity with spelling-sound correspondences & common spelling conventions & their use in identifying printed words, "sight" recognition of frequent words, & independent reading, including reading aloud. Fluency should be promoted through practice with a wide variety of well-written & engaging texts at the child's own comfortable reading level.

* Children who have started to read independently, typically

2nd graders & above, should be encouraged to sound out & confirm the identities of visually unfamiliar words they encounter in the course of reading meaningful texts, recognizing words primarily through attention to their letter-sound relationships. Although context & pictures can be used as a tool to monitor word recognition, children should not be taught to use them to substitute for information provided by the letters in the word.

* Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition accuracy & reading fluency, both of the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely & effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent.

* Beginning in the earliest grades, instruction should promote comprehension by actively building linguistic & conceptual knowledge in a rich variety of domains, as well as through direct instruction about comprehension strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events & outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, & monitoring for coherence & misunderstandings. This instruction can take place while adults read to students or when students read themselves.

* Once children learn some letters, they should be encouraged to write them, use them to begin writing words or parts of words, & use words to begin writing sentences. Instruction should be designed with the understanding that the use of invented spelling is not in conflict with teaching correct spelling. Beginning writing with invented spelling can be helpful for developing understanding of the identity & segmentation of speech sounds & sound-spelling relationships. Conventionally correct spelling should be developed through focused instruction & practice. Primary grade children should be expected to spell previously studied words & spelling patterns correctly in their final writing products. Writing should take place regularly & frequently to encourage children to become more comfortable & familiar with it.

* Throughout the early grades, time, materials, & resources should be provided with 2 goals: (a) to support daily independent reading of texts selected to be of particular interest for the individual student, & beneath the individual student's frustration level, in order to consolidate the student's capacity for independent reading and (b) to support daily assisted or supported reading & rereading of texts that are slightly more difficult in wording or in linguistic, rhetorical, or conceptual

structure in order to promote advances in the student's capabilities.

* Throughout the early grades, schools should promote independent reading outside school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments & expectations, summer reading lists, encouraging parent involvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians, who share this goal.

**Promoting Literacy Development in Preschool & Kindergarten**

It is clear from research that the process of learning to read is a lengthy one that begins very early in life. Given the importance identified in the research literature of starting school motivated to read & with the prerequisite language & early literacy skills, the committee recommends that all children, especially those at risk for reading difficulties, should have access to early childhood environments that promote language & literacy growth & that address a variety of skills that have been identified as predictors of later reading achievement. Preschools & other group care settings for young children often provide relatively impoverished language & literacy environments, in particular those available to families with limited economic resources. As ever more young children are entering group care settings pursuant to expectations that their mothers will join the work force, it becomes critical that the preschool opportunities available to lower-income families be designed in ways that support language & literacy development.

Preschool programs, even those designed specifically as interventions for children at risk of reading difficulties, should be designed to provide optimal support for cognitive, language, & social development, within this broad focus, however, ample attention should be paid to skills that are known to predict future reading achievement, especially those for which a causal role has been demonstrated. Similarly, & for the same reasons, kindergarten instruction should be designed to stimulate verbal interaction, to enrich children's vocabularies, to encourage talk about books, to provide practice with the sound structure of words, to develop knowledge about print, including the production & recognition of letters, and to generate familiarity with the basic purposes & mechanisms of reading.

Children who will probably need additional support for early language & literacy development should receive it as early as possible. Pediatricians, social workers, speech-language therapists, & other preschool practitioners should receive research-based guidelines to assist them to be alert for signs that children are having difficulties acquiring early language &

literacy skills. Parents, relatives, neighbors, & friends can also play a role in identifying children who need assistance. Through adult education programs, public service media, instructional videos provided by pediatricians, & other means, parents can be informed about what skills & knowledge children should be acquiring at young ages, and about what to do & where to turn if there is concern that a child's development may be lagging behind in some respects.

**Education & Professional Development for All Involved in Literacy Instruction**

The critical importance of the teacher in the prevention of reading difficulties must be recognized, & efforts should be made to provide all teachers with adequate knowledge about reading & the knowledge & skill to teach reading or its developmental precursors. It is imperative that teachers at all grade levels understand the course of literacy development & the role of instruction in optimizing literacy development.

Preschool teachers represent an important, & largely underutilized, resource in promoting literacy by supporting rich language & emergent literacy skills. Early childhood educators should not try to replicate the formal reading instruction provided in schools.

The preschool & primary school teacher's knowledge & experience, as well as the support provided to the teacher, are central to achieving the goal of primary prevention of reading difficulties. Each of these may vary according to where the teacher is in his or her professional development. A critical component in the preparation of pre-service teachers is supervised, relevant, clinical experience providing ongoing guidance & feedback, so they develop the ability to integrate & apply their knowledge in practice.

Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the research foundations of reading. Collaborative support by the teacher preparation institution & the field placement is essential. A critical component for novice teachers is the support of mentors who have demonstrated records of success in teaching reading.

Professional development should not be conceived as something that ends with graduation from a teacher preparation program, nor as something that happens primarily in graduate classrooms or even during in-service activities. Rather, ongoing support from colleagues & specialists, as well as regular opportunities for self-examination & reflection, are critical components of the career-long development of excellent teachers.

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**Teaching Reading to Speakers of Other Languages**

Schools have the responsibility to accommodate the linguistic needs of students with limited proficiency in English. Precisely how to do this is difficult to prescribe, because students' abilities & needs vary greatly, as do the capacities of different communities to support their literacy development. The committee recommends the following guidelines for decision making:

* If language minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speaking a language for which there are instructional guides, learning materials, & locally available proficient teachers, then these children should be taught how to read in their native language while acquiring proficiency in spoken English, and then subsequently taught to extend their skills to reading in English.

* If language minority children arrive at school with no proficiency in English but speak a language for which the above conditions cannot be met & for which there are insufficient numbers of children to justify the development of the local community to meet such conditions, the instructional priority should be to develop the children's proficiency in spoken English. Although print materials may be used to develop understanding of English speech sounds, vocabulary, & syntax, the postponement of formal reading instruction is appropriate until an adequate level of proficiency in spoken English has been achieved.

**Ensuring Adequate Resources to Meet Children's Needs**

To be effective, schools with large numbers of children at risk for reading difficulties need rich resources--manageable class size & student-teacher ratios, high-quality instructional materials in sufficient quantity, good school libraries, & pleasant physical environments. Achieving this may require extra resources for schools that serve a disproportionate number of high-risk children.

Even in schools in which a large percentage of the students are not achieving at a satisfactory level, a well-designed classroom reading program, delivered by an experienced & competent teacher, may be successful in bringing most students to grade level or above during the primary grades. However, achieving & sustaining radical gains is often difficult when improvements are introduced on a classroom by classroom basis. In a situation of school-wide poor performance, school restructuring should be considered as a vehicle for preventing reading difficulties. Ongoing professional development for teachers is typically a component of

successful school restructuring efforts.

**Addressing the Needs of Children With Persistent Reading Difficulties**

Even with excellent instruction in the early grades, some children fail to make satisfactory progress in reading. Such children will require supplementary services, ideally from a reading specialist who provides individual or small-group intensive instruction that is coordinated with high-quality instruction from the classroom teacher. Children who are having difficulty learning to read do not, as a rule, require qualitatively different instruction from children who are "getting it." Instead, they more often need application of the same principles by someone who can apply them expertly to individual children who are having difficulty for one reason or another.

Schools that lack or have abandoned reading specialist positions need to reexamine their needs for specialists to ensure that well-trained staff are available for intervention with children & for ongoing support to classroom teachers. Reading specialists & other specialist roles need to be defined so that two-way communication is required between specialists & classroom teachers about the needs of all children at risk of & experiencing reading difficulties. Coordination is needed at the instructional level so that intervention from specialists coordinates with & supports classroom instruction. Schools that have reading specialists as well as special educators need to coordinate the roles of these specialists. Schools need to ensure that all the specialists engaged in child study or individualized educational program (IEP) meetings for special education placement, early childhood intervention, out-of-classroom interventions, or in-classroom support are well informed about research in reading development & the prevention of reading difficulties.

Although volunteer tutors can provide valuable practice & motivational support for children learning to read, they should not be expected either to provide primary reading instruction or to instruct children with serious reading problems.

**********

**Conclusion**

**********

Most reading difficulties can be prevented. There is much work to be done, however, that requires the aggressive deployment of the information currently available, which is distilled in this report. In addition, many questions remain unanswered concerning reading development, some of which we address in our

recommendations for research. While science continues to discover more about how children learn to read & how teachers & others can help them, the knowledge currently available can equip our society to promote higher levels of literacy for large numbers of American schoolchildren. The committee's hope is that the recommendations contained in this report will provide direction for the first important steps.

# READING AND LEARNING FROM TEXT

## Second Edition

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**Harry Singer**
*late of the University of California, Riverside*
**Dan Donlan**
*University of California, Riverside*

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> *The University of Texas*

> *"... a valuable contribution to the field of reading ... the examples of how to implement a variety of strategies to increase learning from text are carefully chosen and illustrated ... the volume translates current research and theory into language that is meaningfulR to a range of school personnel. The book would serve pre-service and in-service educators well ... the text is focused, well organized, carefully designed -- and it is most enjoyable reading ... we believe Singer and Donlan have produced an excellent book which meets an important need, and that teachers and students will benefit from this contribution. Anyone concerned with the use of text in the classroom and how to stimulate learning from text must not bypass this volume."*
> ***-- Journal of Reading***

The authors provide teaching strategies that have been classroom tested for accuracy, practicality, and reliability. The methods are directly applicable to classroom activities and help cope with the wide range of individual differences in reading achievement. The volume spans all content areas throughout the grades and elevates students thinking to higher levels of abstraction, generalization, and problem solving. New features in this edition include expanded coverage of elementary education, and an improved organization following a new model for reading and learning.

The ideal text for education and reading education students as well as a reference for in-service teachers and education professors. The authors provide teaching strategies that have been classroom tested for accuracy, practicality, and reliability. The methods are directly applicable to classroom activities and help cope with the wide range of individual differences in reading achievement. The volume spans all content areas throughout the grades and elevates students thinking to higher levels of abstraction, generalization, and problem solving. New features in this edition include expanded coverage of elementary education, an improved organization following a new model for reading and learning.

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# A Close-Up Look at Teaching Reading

## Focusing on Children and Our Goals

Created by Sharon Taberski, The Manhattan New School, New York

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Many teachers would like to address students' individual learning needs, but don't always know how to proceed. Other teachers, while having their students' best interests in mind, create classroom environments that work against, rather than with, children.

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Her new video series shows ways you can help your own students become fluent, independent readers--how you can assess students' reading in authentic ways, demonstrate effective reading strategies, create plenty of opportunities for children to practice strategies, and provide for genuine response from both the children and yourself.

## 1. Independent Reading and Reading Share

This video begins with a brief tour of Sharon's classroom, during which she explains the importance of materials and room organization in helping her and her students achieve their goals. She begins her day sitting alongside the children as they read, to learn as much as she can about their reading progress. This information will guide her teaching over the course of the day. Throughout the independent reading portion of the workshop, her students are given many opportunities to read and practice their reading strategies. Later, they reconvene at the meeting area to discuss what they have learned about themselves as readers.

## 2. Read Aloud and Shared Reading

Filmed during the meeting portion of the reading workshop, this video shows Sharon demonstrating reading strategies as she reads aloud to the children. Later, Sharon guides the children in the shared reading of a text. During read aloud and shared reading, she provides the children with opportunities to respond to literature, demonstrates effective reading strategies, and teaches skills in a supportive, meaningful context.

## 3. Reading Conferences

This third video focuses on ways you can confer with children to assess their reading needs and then use that information to determine what to teach next. It highlights several methods for making these assessments, including retellings, reading discussions, and running records. Sharon also demonstrates ways she uses her assessment notebooks and clipboard to record observations and plan classroom experiences to address children's needs.

## 4. Guided Reading

In this portion of the reading workshop, Sharon expands the notion of guided reading to include situations where small groups of children are called together to work on specific reading strategies. The children are grouped for varied lengths of time in response to their particular reading needs as assessed during reading conferences and independent reading. Sharon focuses on one strategy at a time, provides opportunities for the children to practice the strategies, and offers support as she helps them move toward independence in reading.

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The bell rings to begin the second class period and marks the transition to Maria's other life at school, her life as a student. In the 5 minutes it takes for Maria to gather her books in the office and walk to the second floor of the school, her entire persona changes. In the office, Maria has been confident and assured, smiling and talking easily with parents and the school staff. She gives the appearance of being in complete control. By the time Maria arrives on the second floor, however, she has become somber and silent, not making eye contact with anyone as she enters the room. She silently chooses a seat at the back of the room and slumps in the desk. On the basis of her academic performance, Maria has been designated as a "student at risk" who may fail ninth grade. With the start of second period, Maria's academic day begins.

In Maria's junior high school, those students who have received failing marks in three or more classes during the last grading period are identified by school administrators as at risk. Maria is one of 13 students who attend a specially designated second-period class to receive extra help with academic coursework. (During fifth period, another 18 students declared by the school to be at risk for similar reasons also gather for study skill assistance.)

In a matter of only minutes, Maria has been transformed into an uninterested student visible in the back or corner chairs of our classrooms, a student whose behaviors convey to teachers a lack of engagement in school. As the second period begins, Maria's school day essentially has come to an end. What lies ahead for her in the next 5 hours will be a series of academic disappointments and failures.

The school struggle of Maria and students like her is often enmeshed in a struggle with literacy, the ability to handle the academic demands of reading and writing tasks in school. Classroom observations of Maria reveal the extent and depth of her literacy struggles. Since the intermediate years in elementary school, Maria's literacy abilities have not kept pace with those of her peers or with what the academic tasks demand for her to be successful as a literacy learner. By her own report, Maria's link with literacy has been tenuous since second or third grade, and is further complicated by her ongoing efforts to become fluent in English.

One characteristic shared by most less proficient readers and writers is an eroding set of beliefs about their own abilities to achieve success in school (Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995). Maria, like others in her second-period class, struggles with the reading and writing tasks that form the basis for succeeding in most content discipline areas, so she has come to believe that academic success is not within her reach. Bandura (1986), a social learning theorist, has said that the element of success is the greatest single predictor for engagement in school tasks. According to Bandura, success serves to further develop one's sense of competence. We believe that this element of success is pivotal in adolescents' development of their sense of self, particularly the academic self.

In this article, we will discuss how students' literacy behaviors in the classroom relate to their academic success or lack thereof, how these behaviors reinforce students' developing sense of self, and how teachers can support perceived and actual academic competence in their students. The theoretic grounding for our work and the ideas presented in this article are informed by Bandura's theory of self-efficacy as it relates to individual student performance in a given situation. The basic premise in self-efficacy theory is that one's confidence to perform a given task is likely to influence actual performance. Bandura would tell us that confidence is specific to the task, so that one's confidence in succeeding with mathematics may not be the same as for comprehending a novel. We will explore the relationship between beliefs about literacy tasks and performance and the degree of success that results.

We will begin by sharing information from year-long classroom observations and interviews with students at Southwestern Middle School that illuminates how students' beliefs about literacy (literacy self-efficacy) and their performance (ability to actually perform the specific literacy task) are related. Observations were focused on understanding how adolescents' literacy beliefs affected their performance in school. We interviewed students in the at-risk classes, their more academically successful

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Carolyn Colvin
Linda Kramer Schlosser

# Developing academic confidence to build literacy: What teachers can do

*This study examined how middle school students' literacy behaviors in the classroom relate to their academic success, how these behaviors reinforce their developing sense of self, and how middle school teachers can support their students' academic competence.*

The school day is about to begin at Southwestern Middle School (pseudonym), a neighborhood school in an older, low-income urban area in southern California, USA. The school's main office is a hub of activity in the minutes just before the bell rings to signal the start of the first class. As one enters this aging stucco structure, the scene might resemble that of many schools. What makes this one unique is the ethnic and linguistic mix of the local neighborhood as represented by the approximately 850 students in Grades 7–9. Many families are recent immigrants from camps in Laos and Vietnam. Almost half of the students are Asian or Asian American, with a substantial number who are of Mexican origin or Latino/a. The majority of neighborhood families speak English as their second language.

Approximately 45 minutes before the first bell, a phone call from a parent rings through the school switchboard, the first of many calls that continue well into the morning after classes begin. The parent calls are often to explain a child's absence, but the content of their queries also ranges across a wide variety of topics related to school. In order to negotiate the variety of languages spoken in the neighborhood, students have been recruited to help in communicating with parents whose English is limited. One such student is Maria Torres (pseudonym).

Maria is a ninth-grade student assistant who arrives well before the start of school to serve as a translator and who remains at the phone desk through the first hour talking with Spanish-speaking parents whose English is limited. Because Maria is very dependable and responsible in her skillful handling of the translation between English and Spanish, the office staff has come to rely on her expertise. Maria has acquired high status among the other student assistants because she is so effective and confident in her duties.

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social interactions in the classroom and beyond, exerting a strong influence on the academic or literate selves adolescents are constructing.

## How do students and teachers work together?

As university colleagues engaged in efforts to prepare effective teachers to teach at the middle grades, we devoted one school year to specifically observing the ways in which students and teachers worked together on literacy learning tasks. To gather data, we observed classes, interviewed both students and teachers, and documented the kinds of assignments involving literacy learning. We kept field notes to document classroom observations and interviews. In addition, we audiotaped student and teacher interviews and transcribed them for analysis. These data were collected in an attempt to better understand how adolescents' literacy beliefs affect their performance in school. Our analysis of the data was an ongoing process throughout the project. Individually, we searched for themes that evolved from the data, compared these themes with one another and across data sets, and looked for counterexamples that would necessitate the revision of themes.

We closely observed the relationship between literacy performance and beliefs for academically successful and academically marginal students. As we analyzed the themes that began to emerge during the course of observing and interviewing, we created a working list of literacy behaviors that we had observed or that students had described using. Because Bandura's work was influential in our theoretical frame, we focused on instructional settings and student behaviors that would support the self-efficacy theory and for those examples that would run counter to Bandura's work.

With an array of literacy behaviors, we were able to display along a continuum those behaviors that appeared to result in success and those that gave students no direct or indirect success with literacy tasks. We defined *success* as a student action or a classroom event that reinforced or maintained the focal student's efforts with literacy. An example of such a response is a verbal comment or nonverbal response from a teacher or one's peers that provided assistance or clarity regarding a student's literacy attempt. Using self-efficacy theory as the frame for understanding how adolescents approach academic literacy tasks, we were able to explore how interactions with teachers are central to the formation of students' competency literacy beliefs.

## Students' beliefs about themselves

| | |
|---|---|
| Academically successful student | I just keep doing what I am supposed to do and I get good grades |
| Researcher | What are you supposed to do? |
| Student | Basically all your work. Trying it. I mean. And asking questions when there's something you don't understand. Get help from your teachers. Pay attention in class. Those things. I pay attention a lot. And I study at night. I read over my notes or even my textbook sometimes. |
| Academically marginal student | I have to develop good study habits. I know that and I want to do better to get my credits (for high school). |
| Researcher | How can you do better? |
| Student | Well, what I do is I always use the phone or go out or listen to the radio. What I have to do now is figure out how I'm going to do my homework first. And I need to study harder. |
| Researcher | How do you do that? |
| Student | I guess I just stop messing around with people. Don't do drugs. You know. Like that. Respect the teachers so they notice you and give you a good grade. |

When students were interviewed regarding their sense of competency with regard to school literacy tasks, we found their self-reports to be revealing not only because of what their comments suggested about school literacy tasks but, importantly, because students were fairly good judges of when they were struggling with literacy tasks. Observations and interviews indicated that academically marginal students, despite their enrollment in special skills classes, lacked the repertoire of knowledge about learning strategies that was easily articulated by their more successful classmates. When acade-



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classmates, and teachers to gather impressions regarding students' academic performance. Finally, we will discuss the strategies teachers can use to create classroom settings that are more likely to assist students in strengthening their academic performance, particularly as it relates to successfully performing reading and writing tasks in school.

## Theoretical framework

Although beliefs concerning one's self-efficacy can affect performance throughout life, the particular impact of these beliefs during early adolescence is widely recognized (Eccles et al., 1993). Self-conscious and struggling with self-esteem, young adolescents are greatly concerned with gaining acceptance (Elkind, 1984; George & Alexander, 1993). In this developmental stage, competency beliefs can undergo dramatic changes (Kramer Schlosser, 1991; Shell et al., 1995). The changes in school structure they encounter in moving from the elementary to the middle school may exacerbate any negative competency beliefs. Upon entering the middle grades, students leave predominantly self-contained learning environments for multiple classrooms with different teachers, expectations, and rules, a wider, more diverse set of peers, and a greater sense of anonymity (Allington, 1990; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Kramer Schlosser, 1992).

For many adolescents, social interactions serve as a gauge of their connection to school, one measure of their engagement in learning. Our own work demonstrates that in the course of the school day middle school students do attend to academics, however, their primary focus is on the social context of school. Thus, adolescents are developing critical beliefs about themselves as learners at the same time they are constructing multiple dimensions of self, including their self-worth and importance as viewed through the lenses of others. Perhaps it is an artifact of development, but the merging of the personal and academic selves appears particularly critical for the middle school student and may portend a student's future academic success. In Maria's case, her sense of self as a confident and able student assistant in the school office stands in stark contrast to the invisible person Maria became once she assumed her role as a student.

## Teachers' influence on efficacious behavior

Middle-level students' interactions with teachers help to form the context within which their sense of self is fostered (Bandura, 1986; Brantlinger, 1993). Achieving success in school is related, in large part, to the extent and depth of interactions with teachers, because young adolescents' attitudes and beliefs about competence are strongly influenced by teachers' messages (Kramer Schlosser, 1992). Teachers are powerful individuals in the lives of adolescents: they critique academic work, clarify expectations, enforce rules, and provide support. Students are also recipients of teachers' nonverbal messages contained in written feedback on academic work, in strategies used in calling on, in praising, and in recognizing them publicly, and in the facial expressions and voice tones used in and outside the classroom. Students negotiate the institution of school and experience a sense of success or failure based on these interactions.

For students, teachers are the personification of the institution of school; messages from teachers may be interpreted as though they represent the entity of school itself (Brantlinger, 1993). Students are likely to cast past and present experiences with teachers and school in powerful ways, resulting in beliefs that may become permanent and unchangeable over time. From students' beliefs come the enacting of classroom behaviors, and it is these behaviors that clearly distinguish the more academically successful students from those who are less successful.

We believe that the ways in which students approach reading and writing tasks, in part, may be understood in terms of the level of self-efficacy or confidence they have acquired. According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy beliefs are generative and draw on behavioral, cognitive, and social elements, all of which come together in a course of action—in our case, some dimension of literacy learning. As we have indicated, teachers play a pivotal role in the way these beliefs coalesce for students. In many respects, teachers orchestrate the


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**Characteristics of efficacious and less efficacious literacy learners**

| Students with greater literacy self-efficacy will | Students with less literacy self-efficacy will |
|---|---|
| ➤ take greater risks in reading and writing because of the likelihood for success. | ➤ avoid risks with reading and writing because they anticipate failure. |
| ➤ establish valuable social networks among peers and actively seek feedback, assistance, and support. | ➤ seek isolation in the classroom and opt for silence, avoid opportunities for feedback and talk. |
| ➤ define reading and writing as acts of meaning-making. | ➤ define reading and writing as discrete performances, as a set of skills or discrete tasks not based on meaning-making efforts. |
| ➤ persist in completing literacy tasks in spite of failure or task ambiguity. | ➤ make attempts to initiate literacy tasks but rarely complete tasks. |
| ➤ anticipate success, attribute literacy success to their own hard work. | ➤ be surprised by literacy success without understanding the means to replicate success. |
| ➤ express value for literacy and demonstrate a sense that they are in control. | ➤ express value for literacy but seem uncertain how to achieve it. |

go to college. I need to have the self-confidence and desire to achieve my goals in life.

For those students who confirmed in interviews a strong or stable sense of self-efficacy for school literacy tasks, we were able to note classroom behaviors that seemed to reinforce these students' beliefs about themselves as literacy learners. From our observations, key characteristics that seemed to define efficacious students were (a) their sense of risk taking, (b) their flexibility in implementing a range of strategies to ensure academic success, and (c) their definitions of reading and writing as meaning-making activities.

Efficacious students were confident, strategic, and organized in the way they approached classroom literacy tasks. Strategies mentioned by these academically successful students often involved working with others, rereading text material (silently and aloud), posing questions of the text and themselves as readers, and requesting help (from peers and teachers). In large part, these students experienced academic success and were adept at establishing effective social networks that provided another avenue for constructing meaning as readers and writers. These students were also likely to attribute their successful performance to their willingness to persevere with an assignment or task and moving on to a new behavior or strategy if one they selected seemed to be ineffective. In a word, literacy seemed to be something they knew they could control and manipulate for their own purposes.

## Profile of less efficacious students

In contrast, those students who were less successful academically and less confident of their literacy abilities presented a much different classroom profile. While efficacious students were seen as flexible risk takers, these students were observed to be circumspect, hesitant, and rigid.

Researcher: Can you make a prediction for me about how school is going for you this year?

Student: No, not really. I never know.

Researcher: There's no way to tell if you are doing OK? If you will pass?

Student: Well, I guess it's if you get your homework done. Or if you can sit and listen to the teacher talking for a long time and expecting you to understand everything she said, just exactly like she said it. That's just all.

Researcher: So do you take notes when they talk?

Student: Sometimes, but no, not a lot. In some of our classes we're not supposed to take notes. They say it is impolite to write while they talk.

Researcher: Oh. Do you think there should be someone who looks over your grades and pulls kids out to warn them and help them when they aren't doing well just so they know?



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mically marginal students did call on literacy strategies, these strategies were limited in scope and provided little assistance for a struggling literacy learner. Those more academically successful students, on the other hand, appeared to be well aware of behaviors that were likely to bring about success. These students described a series of routines that, when implemented, would likely result in a successful experience with literacy.

Academically successful student: I will have to do good in school to go to collage (sic) and save time so I don t neglect my friends, and save money to out on my own and lurn (sic) to use it wisely. Preparing for this dose (sic) not only take education but it takes the will to want to do this. You have to put your mind to it and believe in yourself

Academically marginal student: Read? I never read a book in my life

Researcher: Do your mom and your uncles read?

Student: Yeah I guess so

Researcher: What about writing? Do you like it?

Student: No. I hardly ever write. It s like reading. I just hate it and I m no good at it

Researcher: You never do it outside school?

Student: Maybe I read letters girls write to my friends, but that s it

The Table on the following page summarizes the literacy behaviors/beliefs documented for efficacious (more likely to experience academic success) and less efficacious (academically marginal) students. To distinguish between the more academically successful students and those students like Maria, who experienced little academic success, we selected characteristics that would represent the dramatic differences in student efficacy beliefs/behaviors. During our observations, we noted several students who would be positioned somewhere in the middle of our efficacy continuum and, depending on individual characteristics of literacy behaviors/beliefs and literacy tasks, might shift along the continuum from efficacious to less efficacious.

For example, it is likely that a particular student positioned somewhere in the middle of this continuum might accurately gauge the likelihood of his/her successful literacy performance (item 6) and anticipate a less-than-successful experience with literacy and thus take very few risks (item 1). In other words, it was not uncommon to observe students who demonstrated efficacious characteristics and yet, in a slightly different context, their literacy behavior might be interpreted as less efficacious. Literacy self-efficacy for such a student might be interpreted as evolving, as shifting or changeable. Upon reflection, it is the student with shifting, emerging efficacy for literacy that caught our attention. These students best exemplify the power of applying Bandura s theory for middle-grade students, because teachers have opportunities to make an impact on these students beliefs while their efficacy for literacy appears to be in flux.

An additional complication in our attempts to understand student beliefs and performance came with the realization that students might have a different self-efficacy profile in another content area. Therefore, the information contained in the Table should not necessarily be interpreted as revealing static, all-encompassing profiles of individual students (although it does for some students in our study). Our goal in this article is to explore the kinds of literacy behaviors likely to be observed in middle-level classrooms in order to promote greater understanding of the manner in which such behaviors may be interpreted and understood by teachers when applying Bandura s lens of self-efficacy.

As mentioned earlier, examining beliefs and behaviors of efficacious students in contrast with less efficacious students can also provide clear distinctions between those students who are academically successful versus those who regularly experience little academic success. We share first a typical profile of an efficacious student who regularly experiences academic success.

## Profile of efficacious students

Ten years from now, I will be working on my internship at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. I will be interning to be a child psychiatrist. I will have just completed college and am almost ready to start in the working world.

In order to prepare for the future, I must first get a good education. I must try my best in school and then



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Student: Yeah. That would help. That way you would know when to work.

Less efficacious students were more likely to be cautious in placing themselves in classroom arenas where their literacy proficiency would be revealed. Often, their tendency was to stay out of the literacy spotlight in order to avoid showing their peers and the teacher their struggles with literacy. For less efficacious students there was less pain involved in being removed from class because of incomplete assignments than to endure the public show often made of their literacy struggles. We speculated that less efficacious students avoided peer feedback because they seemed unable to negotiate the classroom context for knowing how to ask for help. To persevere with an academic literacy task, one must understand where and how to begin; lacking that knowledge, some students found it easier to never start.

The strategies used by less efficacious students provided critical information to us about their understanding of literacy. Because they usually avoided feedback from peers, they were left to their own devices when confronted with challenging literacy tasks. Their range of literacy strategies, as compared with efficacious students, was constrained and rigid. During our conversations, many less successful students could suggest only one reading strategy—rereading—when confronted with uncertainty. Often, even subsequent rereadings did not help students acquire the level of understanding necessary for school success.

Perhaps the most revealing aspects of our talks with these students were their definitions of good reading and writing. Less efficacious students defined successful reading and writing as something related to the performance of reading and writing; in other words, the ability to pronounce all the words when reading aloud and the use of appropriate and legible penmanship. Students guided by these definitions of reading and writing are less likely to experience the level of academic success necessary for doing well in school.

> I'm not good at reading out loud but to myself, I can read good. Cause when I read out loud, I skip sentences and stuff. Skip words, like put words into other words.

Clearly, all students approach literacy tasks with varying sets of beliefs regarding their competency and the likelihood for success. These beliefs stem from interactions with teachers and school experiences that have accumulated over time, and result in students' conscious and unconscious decisions concerning the way they manage school literacy tasks.

We believe middle-grade teachers are particularly well positioned to influence the self-efficacy beliefs students have acquired and continue to acquire through those developmentally crucial middle grades. Teachers have the power to address students' competency beliefs and to mitigate the negative changes that may occur as a result of the transition to middle school if they understand how confidence can be built.

## Confident classrooms: Suggestions for teachers

The following is an academically marginal student's advice to teachers:

> Well, first of all I would tell them that they should at least give me some credit for making an effort to complete whatever I had to accomplish. No matter if it was a D– or F. All they would have to just show me how to do the work.

What can teachers do to create classrooms in which students behave with greater efficacy?

First, teachers must understand the relationship between student literacy beliefs and the behaviors that follow in order to develop new perspectives for interpreting student behavior. Learning how to interpret specific behaviors related to literacy learning is perhaps the first step in moving toward creating confident classrooms. Teachers who understand this critically important developmental relationship can provide opportunities to showcase students' strengths and, in turn, address students' weaknesses in ways that encourage risk taking and persistence.

Second, teachers *must believe* that students can be competent and capable literacy learners. Students will find it impossible to believe in themselves as literacy learners if they detect that teachers lack the belief that literacy success is within a student's reach. In our interviews, the students with less efficacy for literacy reported they *knew* when teachers



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assumed they would be unable to accomplish academic tasks. Breaking rather cleanly along lines of greater and less literacy efficacy, students would describe situations where they simply gave up on a task because they knew teachers did not feel they were capable. On the other hand, some students reported being inspired to higher levels of persistence if they perceived teacher support. Rather than assuming that a student's literacy performance reflects diminished ability, teachers should first assess the adequacy of a student's prior knowledge for a given task.

Third, conventional wisdom often encourages us to believe that tasks considered to be easy will motivate students. In fact, the opposite is often true. Students' perceptions of themselves as less able readers and writers are often reinforced when they are given literacy tasks that are less involved or less challenging than those assigned to their peers. Students will respond positively to material that challenges them and requires an investment of their efforts as learners. When defining what texts might be challenging, we have found it particularly helpful to think in terms of Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development. In other words, we recommend that students be given material that is slightly beyond their ability to complete when working alone but that they can successfully complete when they receive assistance from a teacher or a peer. Individually, students might become defeated by silently reading paragraphs in a general science textbook, but when they are asked to orally read the text with another student, the task may seem less daunting. Teachers who are equally invested in the process of creating academic success will reward student efforts with encouragement and attention.

Fourth, accomplishing a task may require that it be broken down into its component steps and addressed one step at a time. Less efficacious students in our study were unable to envision literacy tasks in parts that they could accomplish and thus became overwhelmed by the whole. The most effective teachers intercede by talking with students as they devise a plan that includes a step-by-step process for success. ("What have you decided you should do first? How long will that take? What will you do next?") These plans can be paired with appropriate problem-solving strategies ("If you find you are not understanding the reading, what will you do?") so that students persist, evaluating their performance as they go. Becoming a strategic reader/writer requires knowing when to stop the process and evaluate whether one's goals have been accomplished. It is critical that students have input in developing these learning plans, with options to indicate how to begin with monitoring points along the way.

Fifth, be honest and direct. Teachers who begin by discussing the difficulty of the task with students rather than avoiding such a discussion may find the honesty pays off. Implied throughout such discussions between teachers and students should be the belief that students are capable of success if they understand what to do when they encounter difficulties with reading and writing. Strategies such as reading to the end of the sentence to see if meaning is more apparent, reading with a peer, and generating questions are effective. Students need to be assured that they have support in literacy tasks and that teachers trust their ability to handle the task.

We believe some students have experienced less success with literacy tasks because they have incomplete information about how to be successful. Explicit instruction of any valued classroom literacy task is crucial if we are to expect less efficacious students to devise new literacy behaviors in response to their efficacy beliefs. (One student who spoke Spanish as his first language in our study was convinced he was a poor reader because he did not know phonics. In an effort to respect his request for more phonics information, we provided a few minilessons on phonics concepts that would support his reading efforts. Once he could demonstrate this knowledge of letter-sound relationships, he went on to develop other strategies that might be more effective. Central to this story is that his confidence for reading wavered less and his repertoire of strategies was increased.)

Students ought to be encouraged to evaluate their own work from plans they have had a role in developing prior to beginning a task. When students are encouraged to join in the evaluation process, they

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on teachers' collective beliefs about how young adolescents learn and about their own ability to influence the student, particularly marginal students" (Kramer Schlosser, 1992, p. 129).

When one observes the many key tensions with which middle school students must contend, it becomes increasingly apparent how the middle grades are critical, filled both with possibility and great uncertainty. The likelihood for school success depends on what sense students make of the many competing demands—academic and social, personal and public. Finally, success may hinge on teachers who believe that the strength of their own instruction influences students' perceptions of themselves as competent and confident learners.

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can become invested in designating where they would like to improve as readers and writers.

Our final point centers on applying Bandura's notion of self-efficacy for literacy tasks in order to better understand the performance of linguistically diverse students. We believe that self-efficacy is likely to be influenced by culture and language. For students like Maria, interpreting literacy behaviors requires that teachers consider the additional linguistic layers that students must negotiate in the process of learning the dominant language (English) while being asked to perform academically. Other research (Colvin, 1993) with middle-grade students using self-efficacy as the lens for understanding academic performance indicates that L2 students on first glance may appear to have diminished efficacy for literacy as they make the transition from expertise with their first language to fluency in two languages. In reality, notions of self-efficacy become complicated, as students negotiate between first and second language while they are also asked to successfully perform with academic discourse. Teachers who strive to better understand how self-efficacy for literacy learning for L2 students can be supported in classroom learning are likely to help students like Maria create new visions for how learning may happen.

## What Maria's portrait tells us

The authenticity of Maria's work outside the classroom is evident in the lives she affected in positive ways and in the immediate affirmation she received from her work in the school office. As a student assistant, Maria's efforts were constantly focused at the level of communicating in meaningful settings. However, her classroom literacy tasks rarely achieved the same level of consistent meaningful interactions. In the school office, Maria was challenged by her work and accorded respect by her associates as she moved between diverse language settings and groups. The majority of her teachers were unaware of her language abilities with Spanish and, instead, viewed her as an unskilled student who lacked the requisite ability with English.

Upon close examination, what was missing from Maria's classroom experiences was critical to her emerging beliefs about literacy and competence. She needed the means to connect the literacy efficacy and meaningful literacy understanding in her setting of success with the academic setting of school.

## Possibility and uncertainty

Because we began with Maria's story, it seems fitting that we return to the ways in which her teachers might help her write a new ending to the school journey she begins with every second-period class. If Maria were encouraged to think of herself as a reader and a writer in Spanish, she might then come to think of herself as having the ability—with assistance—to be a reader and writer in English. Maria informed us that she was already writing English and Spanish children's stories at home for her siblings. If, for example, her reading teacher could build on this literacy knowledge, connections could be made to school literacy tasks. Her language arts teacher might help her discover the similarity between the children's stories she is writing and the narrative texts she is asked to read in school. If Maria's teachers could find the means to bring her literacy outside of school into her classroom, Maria might be able to connect these multiple literacy performances and reconstruct her self-efficacy as a reader and a writer.

Maria and her peers in the classroom for at-risk students could benefit from having many forms of literacy made available to them, including the school and city newspapers, stories recounted by family members or peers that could be recorded on tape, and paired journal-writing activities. In this way, Maria and her peers might understand the many forms that school reading and writing might take. With access to the computer lab at their school, their concerns with poor penmanship might become secondary to expressing their own opinions and reading and responding to what their peers have written. Bandura reminds us that for students like Maria, opportunities for performance provide the most powerful arena for experiencing success, thereby creating opportunities to revise one's sense of competency. "Whether these opportunities are exploited depends, in large measure,



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# *CREATIVE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO READ*

**Robert Morgan**

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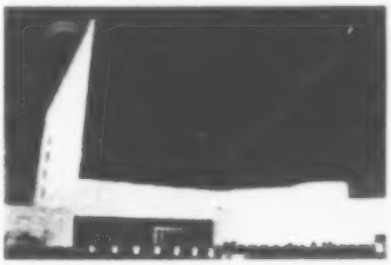
**All of these methods may not work with every student, but some may be the key for some students. These are geared toward parents, but apply well to teachers**

**1. Research on reading generally agrees that the most critical aspect of reading is how a child feels about reading. Positive reinforcement from parents and teachers helps. Children need to know that adults in their lives care about reading.**

**2. Research also agrees that in most cases, forcing a child to read will yield no positive results. Most children should not be REQUIRED to read each day, especially if it's forced reading for pleasure. Some families find that having a reading time when the whole family reads works. Even if the child is reluctant, he knows that the time is reserved for reading. Let him choose to read light material, if nothing else.**



**3. A book allowance is a good idea. In addition to whatever other allowance a child may receive, provide an allowance for books. Even if the allowance allows for the purchase of one paperback book or magazine a week, you've helped encourage reading**

**4. Regular visits to a good magazine rack, coupled with purchases, provide reading material. Parents will probably want to exercise some judgment on reading purchases, but magazines your child shows some interest in and which you approve are a good way to provide material and encourage reading.**

**5. Subscriptions to a magazine or magazines for your child or student are a good idea. There's a certain amount of excitement in "ownership" and a for many students it's very exciting to receive mail.**

**6. Model reading. Children who see their parents reading, often become readers and come to accept that reading is a matter-of-fact activity.**

**19. When a topic of interest develops which involves the whole family--an upcoming trip or vacation, for example--bring home some books on the topic to share with the family.**

**20. Attend used book sales at libraries and other places where good books can be had inexpensively.**

**21. Discuss with your child any book he or she is reading for a class at school. Read the book yourself.**

**22. When you and your child are working on something together have him or her read the directions. Many models and construction kits turn out better when a child reads the instructions aloud.**

**23. Discuss *ideas* in books your child reads. For that matter, where appropriate, discuss ideas in books *you* read. For that matter, read the books your children read.**

**24. Display good books somewhere in your home. Let children know that books have an important place in the home. And don't limit the books to a few essentials...have a generous selection of a wide variety of books.**

**25. Look for computer programs which encourage reading.**

**26. Check out text adventure games...an old computer game genre which required a lot of reading and thinking. A search on "text adventure games" on a major World Wide Web search program should yield many choices. Check the Creative Teaching Links page for good places to look.**

**(back to the Creative Teaching Homepage)**

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MARIE CARBO

# Igniting the Literacy Revolution through Reading Styles

To become literate adults, students must be capable readers. To be capable readers, they must enjoy reading. Matching instruction to their reading styles can help accomplish all of these goals.

*Eric* And I'll tell you right now, I don't want anyone else to go through what I went through.

*J.C.* It's hard. It's not fun.

*Eric* It's real hard. It's boring. You get tired after you finish reading. You don't ever want to read again.

*J.C.* As soon as you're out of school, you don't read.

*Eric* You go home and you watch TV, and you lay down until it's time to do something else. That's how tired you are from reading.

*J.C.* You want to forget about school.

—From the videotape, *How Kids Feel About Learning to Read*—*Eric and J.C.* (1991)

For too long, learning to read has been a torturous process for many American students. The unnecessary distress these students have experienced is a sure sign that our educational system is suffering from deep-rooted misconceptions about how children learn to read and how to guide them toward becoming literate adults. We need to change dramatically the way in which reading instruction is being delivered to our students.

At the heart of our literacy problem are the dangerous notions that all youngsters should be taught to read in the same way and that failure is nearly always the fault of the student. Those misguided beliefs, coupled with the

*For learners who are "global," the principal value of poor readers' listening to stories recorded at a slower-than-usual pace (the recorded book method) reduces much of the stress involved in reading and has been found to increase fluency and comprehension.*

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For students with a strong preference for sitting informally while learning, a special reading place is just the ticket to create feelings of relaxation and pleasure.

subskills lessons and worksheets used in America's classrooms for the past 20 years, have made learning to read needlessly difficult and boring.

Just ask Eric and J.C., the two middle school students quoted above, why they don't read. Their litany of charges has a familiar ring. Seldom were any attempts made to discover their interests, much less how they learn. They say they were bored by the steady stream of mindless worksheets, insulted by the low-level, uninteresting books, embarrassed by their placement in low reading groups and special education classes, and devastated by retention.

Yet, when Eric and J.C. started school, they were excited about learning to read. Both are bright youngsters from middle-class homes. What chance do our disadvantaged or lower ability students have to survive in the 1990s and beyond?

## Education for the Future

As a group, American students don't read well, in fact, they don't read much of anything. Many of our top students, who have grown accustomed to reading as little as possible, have a shallow fund of information. Our poorest readers are likely to wallow in expensive remedial or special education programs for a decade or so and then drop out of school.

The human and financial costs of illiteracy are astronomical. Our prisons are bursting with high school dropouts with low reading ability. A year of prison costs more than a year of schooling at Harvard. Corporate America estimates that it will spend at least $30 billion annually to teach its workers reading, math, and writing skills (Barker 1990).

Workers will also need to learn large amounts of new material in unfamiliar situations and they will need to acquire new skills as yet unidentified. More than ever before, the future will demand knowledge. If we are to increase learning to meet that demand, educators must familiarize themselves with how learning styles influence that most fundamental skill, reading.

## Five Recommendations to Increase Literacy

The simple truth is that American students don't read because they associate reading with pain. Students will spend a substantial amount of their free time reading only when the act of reading is easy for them and when it is what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls a "flow experience," one that is intensely pleasurable.

For each youngster, repeated exposure to the correct reading methods and interesting, well-written books is the fastest way to reach high standards of literacy in our classrooms. Matching their instruction to their reading styles



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**For each youngster, repeated exposure to the correct reading methods and interesting, well-written books is the fastest way to reach high standards of literacy in our classrooms.**

also helps students enjoy reading. But that's not all: when the reading styles of poor readers have been matched to their instruction, many have made gains in reading comprehension at 2 to 10 times their former progress within a school year (Carbo 1987). Of course, not all learning problems disappear when we accommodate students' reading styles, but we create unnecessary learning problems when we don't.

The following five recommendations incorporate the most effective procedures of successful reading styles programs.

- *Identify students' reading styles.* Using checklists, interviews, and questionnaires, teachers can identify students' reading styles. Particularly useful for this purpose is *The Reading Style Inventory*, which produces profiles that describe students' reading styles as well as the methods, strategies, and materials that match those styles (Carbo 1983).
- *Use reading methods and materials that match reading style strengths.* All youngsters, regardless of their styles, need ample opportunities to listen to and read good books and to share them with their classmates. Of course, poor readers display a wide variety of styles, but many who appear to be at risk of reading failure today have styles similar to those of Eric and J.C. They are strongly global, tactile, and kinesthetic. Globals, in particular, need many experiences with holistic reading methods, especially those that provide a *model* of good reading for them.

With the recorded book method, for example, excerpts of stories are recorded at a slower-than-usual pace, so that the printed and spoken words are synchronized for the student. The student listens to each recorded passage two or three times, while looking at the printed passage. When ready, the youngster reads it aloud to an adult or a peer.[1] This method has produced sharp reading gains in just months with global/visual students.

Eric and J.C.'s reading styles teacher, Gari Piper, knew that the recorded book method matched the boy's styles and that they were both highly kinesthetic. So Gari attached a music stand to a stationary bike, placed a book on the stand, and had the boys take turns at pedaling while listening to a recording of a portion of a story and following along in the book. Here's how they reacted to that event:

*Eric:* When you read on that thing, all the words just come out like that. I'm serious!

*J.C.:* When I got up there, well ... when I started to read, I mean, I don't know, it was probably like a miracle. I ... started laughing because I couldn't help it because I was reading almost 100 percent better.

- *Demonstrate high expectations for students' achievement and a high level of respect for their different styles of learning.* Informing each student and his or her teachers and parents about the student's strengths increases everyone's expectations for the child's performance. Teachers and parents gain insights into how the student learns and, therefore, into how to teach the youngster. Students who have been failing begin to believe that they are not stupid, that they *can* learn.

Besides sharing reading styles information with students, respect can be demonstrated by differentiating instruction, designing comfortable learning environments (which may include soft lighting and comfortable furniture), allowing snacks, and permitting youngsters to choose reading materials and reading partners and to work in cooperative learning groups.

- *Use reading materials that reflect the students' interests.* Most students want to choose what they read. The older the student, the greater the need for a wide choice of reading materials. Teachers can find out what the interests of their students are, provide many well-written books based on those interests, and read to their students at least once daily. Although simple, that formula has worked repeatedly.
- *Remove stress from learning to read.* Reading styles teacher Gari Piper described the feelings of the young adults she teaches to read.

> They always have knots in their stomachs. They're scared and embarrassed, they can't stand being called on to read and being put down one more time. To them school is a chamber of terror.

Such stress can be decreased dramatically by helping students to understand their reading style strengths, using instructional approaches that match those strengths, allowing students choices of reading materials based on their interests, designing comfortable learning environments, and by allowing slower readers to listen to tape recordings of stories or texts on their grade level, thereby often eliminating the need for low-level reading groups.

**As a group, American students don't read well; in fact, they don't read much of anything.**



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**Natural, Easy, Enjoyable**

How can high levels of literacy be accomplished in a short period of time? As an important beginning step, we need to learn about each student's reading style and about how style affects the way the child processes and retains information. Both the quickest and the most honorable path toward creating a literate society is to make learning to read what it should be: natural, easy, and enjoyable. Only then will our students choose to devote substantial time and effort to reading—and only then are they likely to become truly literate.□

[1]Generally, beginning readers can be placed in books that are a few months above their reading level. Students who are reading on a 3rd grade level or higher often do very well with recorded books close to or above their language-comprehension level, which may be a few years above their reading level. The method can be used with groups at a listening center or with individuals. For more information, see M. Carbo, (1989), *How to Record Books for Maximum Reading Gains* (Roslyn Hts., N.Y.: National Reading Styles Institute).

**We need to learn . . . about how style affects the way each child processes and retains information.**

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